METRO / A18

DPWH gives billboard owner in Guadalupe till Friday to take it down

SPORTS / A24

Sharapova, Clijsters struggle into Australian Open semifinals

WORLD / A20

Israeli president faces charges for rape, widespread calls for him to resign

ENTERTAINMENT / D1

'Dreamgirls' tops Oscar bets with 8 nominations but shut out of Best Picture

Political EQ 101: How to win an election

YUNG IBA NGA D'YAN WALANG EQ AT IQ!

By Frank Cimatu
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—YOU DON'T have the charm of Sorsogon Rep. Francis "Chiz" Escudero, the wit of Sen. Juan Flavier or even the "pleasant fear" invoked by Ilocos Sur

POLITICAL/ A6

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Thursday, January 25, 2007 ★★ 4 sections / Vol. 22 / No. 48 P18 website: inquirer.net

Palace sees release of 24 RP seamen soon

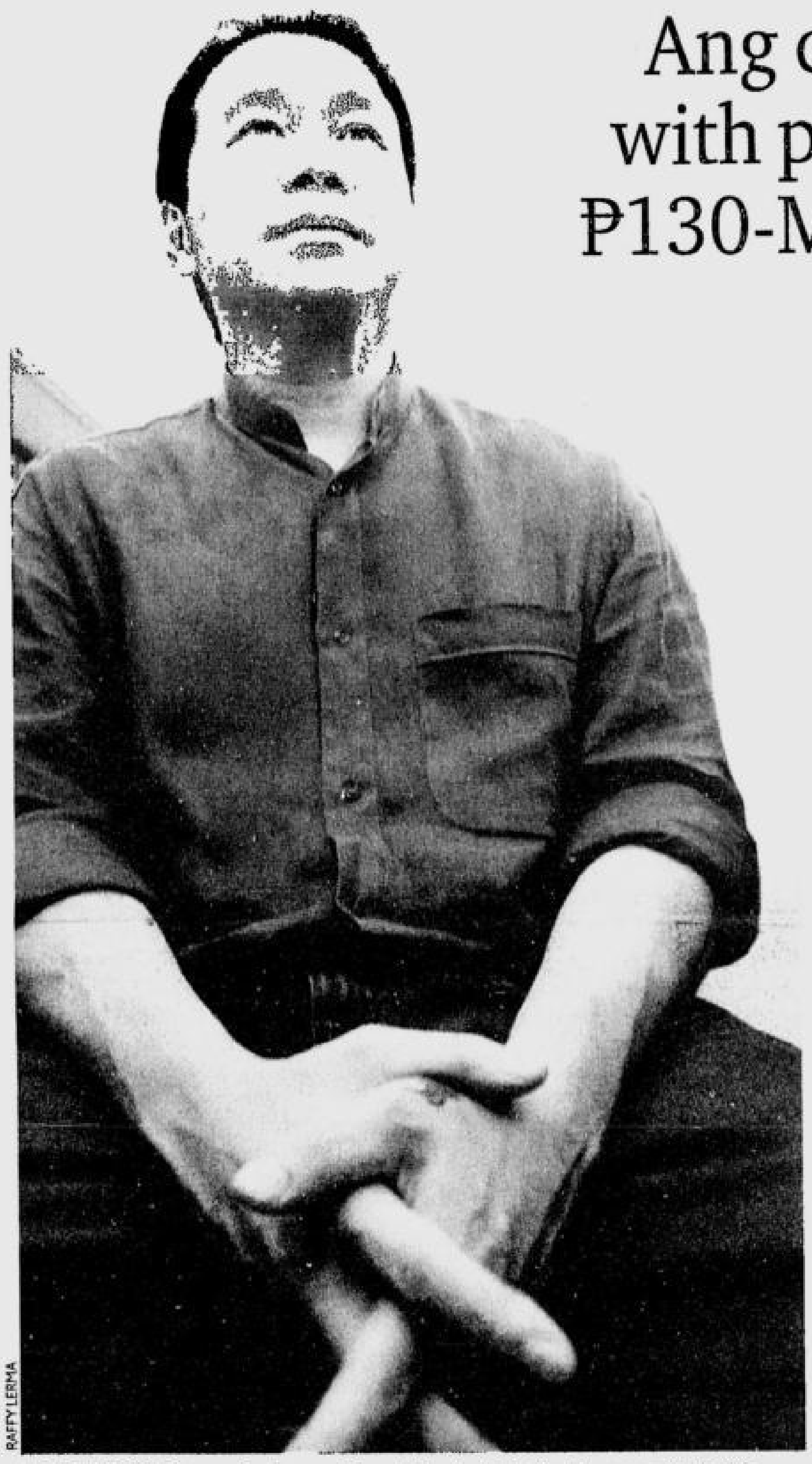
By Gil Cabacungan Jr. and Nikko Dizon

MALACAÑANG IS OPTIMISTIC THAT THE 24 FILipino seamen kidnapped in Nigeria on Saturday will be released in the next few days, citing the Nigerian government's experience in similar situations in the past.

"We assure the families of the 24 OFWs

PALACE/ A4

Atong sings, junks Erap


RAFFY LERMA

THE SINGER: Atong Ang's rendition of the truth is that he conspired with Estrada to divert P130-million kickback from the tobacco excise tax.

Ang cuts bargain with prosecutor on ₱130-M tax kickback

By Norman Bordadora

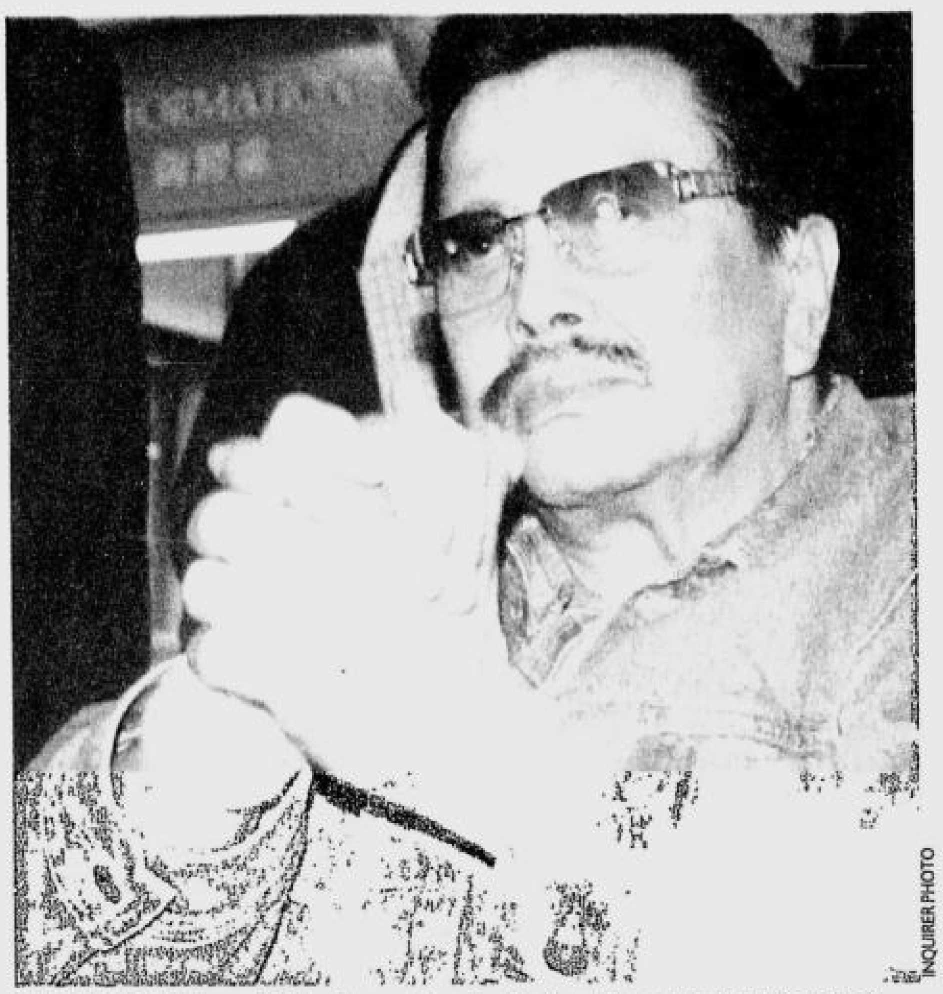
THE ESTRADA DEFENSE TEAM had no inkling that the prosecution had a coup.

Yesterday, Charlie "Atong" Ang, a former gambling buddy of deposed President Joseph "Erap" Estrada, agreed to return to the government P25 million, which he said he took from the P130 million in tobacco excise tax that he and Estrada "diverted" in 1998.

The return of the P25 million is part of the plea bargain that Ang offered to the Sandiganbayan, the court trying him and Estrada for plunder.

The agreement, if approved by the antigraft court, would allow Ang to enter a plea of guilty for the lesser offense of bribery, which carries a six-year prison term, and avoid a possible sentence of 40 years for plunder, Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said.

ATONG SINGS/ A8


INQUIRER PHOTO

EX-PRESIDENT Joseph Estrada counters Ang's allegation saying that there had been a lot of pressure on his former bosom buddy by the Arroyo administration, like offers of irresistible concessions.

Ang offers Corinthian mansion as payment

CHARLIE "ATONG" ANG SAID HE WAS waiving all his rights to and interests in his mansion at No. 18 Manansala St. in the posh Corinthian Gardens in Quezon City so he could return P25 million to the government.

The mansion is the subject of a writ of attachment issued by the Sandiganbayan in connection with the case against Ang.

Prosecutors said Ang had agreed to return P25 million "he personally took from P130 million he conspired with accused Joseph Estrada."

The P130 million came from tobacco ex-

ANG OFFERS/ A8

Erap: I'm the last man standing for the truth

By Norman Bordadora

"I'M THE LAST MAN STANDING FOR the truth."

So said deposed President Joseph "Erap" Estrada in light of his former gambling buddy's plea bargain deal with government prosecutors in which he confirmed that he and Estrada had conspired to divert P130 million in tobacco excise taxes in 1999.

"That is to be expected. There has been a lot of pressure on him by the administration. I pity him," Estrada said of Charlie "Atong" Ang from his estate in Tanay, Rizal, where he is detained.

"I thought he would stand up for the truth. As it turns out, he also gave in," the former President said.

Estrada hinted that Ang, who helped conceptualize Bingo 2-Balls, his administration's answer to the illegal numbers game "jueteng," might have been paid off

ERAP/ A8

5 activists killed in Bicol

UNIDENTIFIED MEN SHOT AND KILLED two members of the militant party-list group Bayan Muna in Sorsogon province, while two others were found dead in Ligao City in neighboring Albay on Tuesday.

A police report showed that Ruben Ermino was dropping passengers from his tricycle in Barangay Tabi, Gubat town in Sorsogon, when two men on a DT Yamaha motorcycle and wearing helmets shot him at close range at noon.

Seven hours later, two men barged into the house of Demetrio Imperial in Barangay Sogoy, Castilla town, and killed him on the spot.

The bodies of the other victims—Miguel Dayandate and Julio Camero—were found in Ligao, according to Chief Supt. Ricardo Padilla, Bicol police commander.

The latest killings brought to 113 the number of Bayan Muna members killed since 2001, when President Macapagal-Arroyo assumed power, an INQUIRER tally showed.

Imperial's wife Cristine, 31, denied that her

5 ACTIVISTS/ A6

Bush seeks US Congress support; Democrats defiant

IT WAS A NIGHT OF POLITICAL THEATER AS President George W. Bush went on Tuesday night before the first Democratic-controlled Congress in a dozen years with his lowest approval ratings in polls.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the first woman to lead the House of Representatives, sat over Bush's shoulder, next to Vice President Dick Cheney. Reaching out to the Democrats, Bush opened his State of the Union address with a tribute to Pelosi and paused to shake her hand.

Bush also asked for prayers for Democratic Sen. Tim Johnson, hospitalized for more than a month after suffering a brain hemorrhage.

Bush divided his speech between domestic and foreign issues, but the Iraq war was topic No. 1.

He implored a skeptical Congress to embrace his unpopular plan to send more US troops to Iraq, saying it represents the best chance in a war that America must not lose. "Give it a chance to work," he pleaded.

But defiant Democrats said they would use their newly won control over the House of Representatives and the Senate to oppose the deployment of an additional 21,500 troops.

"And we will continue to hold him accountable for changing course in Iraq," Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, both Democrats, said in a blunt response issued before the applause had fully faded on Bush's State of the Union address.

Facing a political showdown with Democrats and Republicans alike, Bush was unyielding on Iraq. He also sought to revive his troubled presidency with proposals to ex-

BUSH/ A4

Judge orders Leviste case reinvestigated

By Tarra Quismundo

A MAKATI JUDGE HAS DEFERRED THE arraignment for homicide of Antonio "Tony" Leviste for the Jan. 12 killing of his longtime friend and associate, and granted the request of the latter's family that the case be reinvestigated for a possible upgrading of the charge.

Despite being "under sedation" for hypertension and a heart condition, Leviste, 67, made it to the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 150 early yesterday morning for the scheduled arraignment. But the proceedings lasted barely half an hour.

It was the first time the ex-governor of Batangas and estranged husband of former Sen. Loren Legarda appeared in public since confessing to the fatal shooting of Rafael de las Alas on the ninth floor of the Leviste-owned LPL Towers in Makati, and claiming self-defense.

"The court rules, as prudence dictates, that the arraignment cannot proceed without affording complainants the right to have a second look by prosecutors of its findings as well as existing evidence on record," said Judge Elmo Alameda.

Dismissing a protest from Leviste's camp, Alameda said: "I believe that is a

JUDGE/ A6

FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE: With "Life of Christ" in hand, ex-Batangas Gov. Tony Leviste faces the Makati RTC on Wednesday for his arraignment which has been postponed. REM ZAMORA

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Eastern Luzon will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers, while Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/01/23/07

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

UNO defends 'dynastyism'

By Tarra Quismundo
and Norman Bordadora

STUNG BY FORMER SEN. FRANCISCO Tatad's criticism against its decision to field family members of incumbent senators in the senatorial elections in May, the United Opposition (UNO) yesterday said the issue of political dynasties was not crucial in the race for the legislature.

Tatad, who quit the opposition over the issue, sent a strongly worded letter to deposed President Joseph Estrada, recognized as the leader of the opposition, decrying the UNO's favoring senatorial aspirants with family members already serving in the Senate.

Tatad protested against the drafting of the "three wonders"— Estrada's son San Juan Mayor JV Ejercito, Sen. Pia Cayetano's brother Taguig-Pateros Rep. Alan Peter, and lawyer Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III, son and namesake of the Senate minority leader—into the partial lineup of candidates despite his objections.

If the "three wonders" win, three families would be holding six Senate seats, or one-fourth of the 24-member chamber, he said.

UNO president Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay and spokesperson former Senator Ernesto Maceda defended the "dynastyism" in the opposition slate.

Nothing immoral

"The prevailing opinion from the many members of UNO is that we find there's nothing immoral with family members running for the elections for as long as they are one in heart with the people," said Binay.

Maceda said the dynasty issue was "not a legal issue" as there was no law barring incumbents from seeking public office.

He said the objection to dynasties might be stronger in the provinces where elective positions are passed on among families.

It was less crucial in the Senate "because of the large number of voters you have to get in order to win," he said.

Estrada, through lawyer Rufus Rodriguez, said the No. 1 criterion in the selection of candidates has always been "winnability."

"In order to send members of the opposition to the Senate, they have to win," the ousted leader said.

He said Ejercito, Cayetano and the younger Pimentel have consistently topped the surveys of "winnable" candidates in surveys conducted by two "very credible polling firms"—Pulse Asia and SWS.

With a report from Cynthia Balana

Palace backs shelving of House wage increase bill

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY threw its support behind the decision of the House of Representatives to temporarily shelve the bill proposing a P125-increase in daily wages, which it described as "scary" and "disastrous."

"We support the move of the House of Representatives to withhold for the meantime the legislated wage hike. The call for broader consultations is well taken and will help in keeping economic confidence up, remove the anxieties over layoffs, and ease the concerns of small- and medium-scale enterprises," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement.

At a briefing for reporters, Labor Secretary Arturo Brion said the proposed wage increase was "a scary thought."

"Just imagine what will happen to the small and medium businesses that comprise 99 percent of all employers when they have to increase their wages by P125 a day. That will be disastrous," Brion said.

Before Congress went into its holiday recess last December, the House passed a bill increasing the daily minimum wage of workers by P125, staggered over three years.

It has now deferred implementation of the bill subject to fresh debates.

Political move

Brion said a legislated wage hike was "a political move" that had not been made since 1987, the last time the basic pay was adjusted through Congress.

He said that over the last 20 years, wages had been adjusted by more than P250 a day (of which P152 was implemented in the last seven years) in the National Capital Region through the regional wage boards—Malacañang's preferred route for pay adjustments.

"We have shown that regional wage boards have worked for the interest of both workers and employers," Brion said.

According to Bunye, the administration was continuing to "muster the tripartite wage boards and seek all means of uplifting the lot of our workers through key socioeconomic programs that increase their purchasing power, effectively deliver essential services, and open more opportunities to move up along the job train, all in the best interest of the country."

The Department of Labor and Employment has ordered the regional wage boards—which usually reviews wage rates from July to August—to assess whether the proposed P125 wage increase was necessary and feasible for employers.

'From the air'

"I don't know where they got the P125 [figure]. They probably took it from the air," Brion said.

Wages in the Philippines vary by region but the national daily average is around P283, according to DOLE figures.

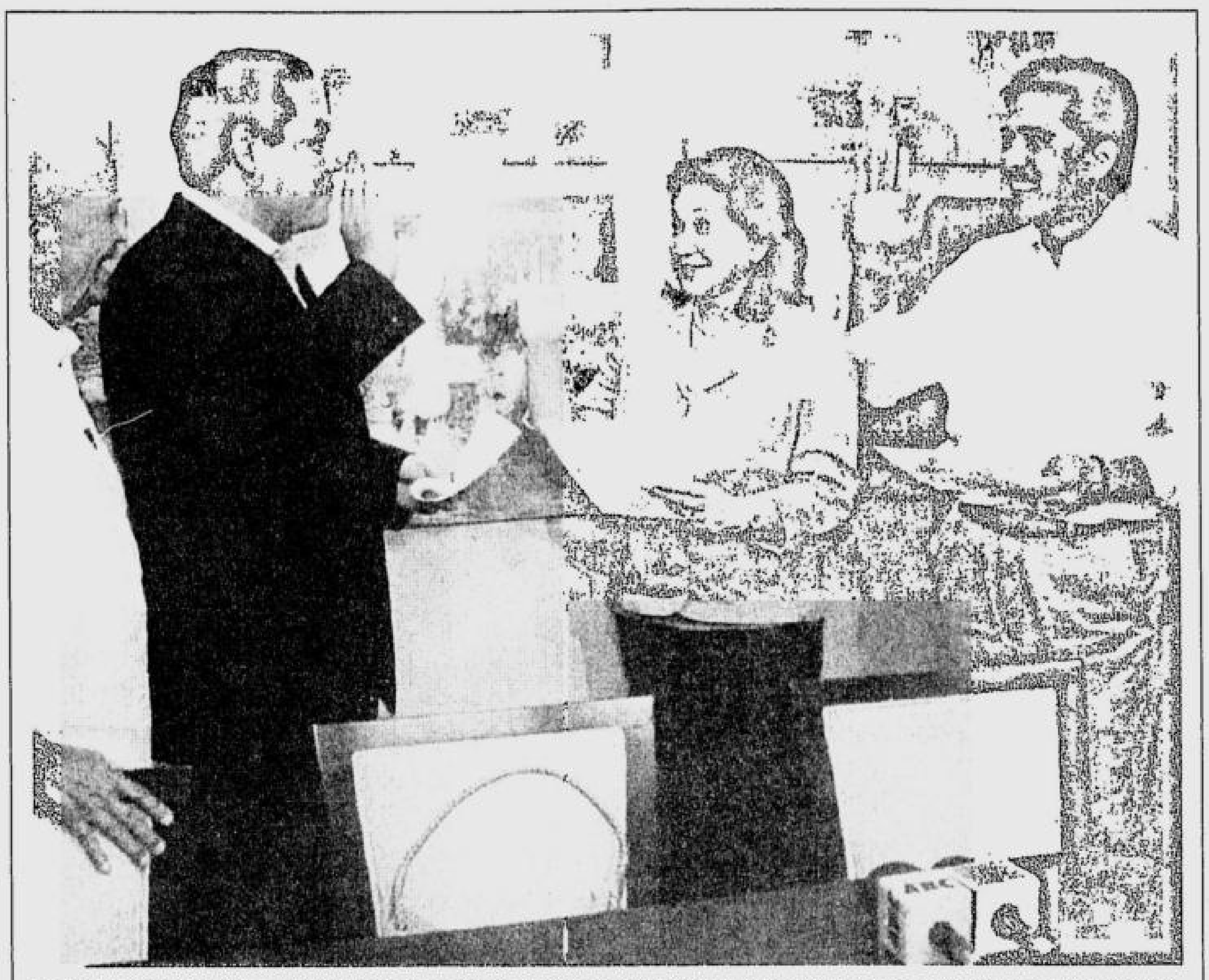
The minimum daily wage in Manila is higher at around P350 ($7.30).

Businessmen, particularly those operating medium-sized enterprises, have warned of massive layoffs and a possible increase in inflation if the pay rise had gone ahead.

Labor groups and unions have been lobbying Congress for almost a decade to increase the minimum wage. The newly passed bill had been languishing in Congress since 2001, largely because of business opposition to it.

Rene Soriano, president of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines, warned recently of "the disastrous chain reaction" that the pay increase could bring.

With an AFP report



FORMER SENATORS Vicente "Tito" Sotto III and Tessie Aquino-Oreta take their oath before Rizal Rep. Jack Duavit, secretary general of the Nationalist People's Coalition, as new members of the the NPC. Looking on is NPC president Frisco San Juan.

Sotto, Oreta bolt LDP, join NPC

VICENTE SOTTO AND TERESITA ORETA, two former senators seeking to return to the Senate through the May elections, yesterday joined the Nationalist People's Coalition, the party known to be controlled by businessman Eduardo Cojuangco.

Sotto quit the faction of the opposition Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP) led by Sen. Edgardo Angara, because of their differences on how they viewed certain political issues.

In a letter to Angara, Sotto said he had to resign because of his decision to join the NPC. Sotto and Oreta, a former LDP member, both formally took their oaths as NPC members yesterday.

"Since the presidential elections in 2004, I noticed our paths diverge on a number of Philippine political issues. At various fora and opportunities, I espoused views different from the party stand. It was only a matter of time for our political affiliations to manifest those differences," Sotto told Angara.

The NPC, the country's second biggest political party, is coalesced with the ruling Lakas-CMD.

Sotto said the NPC's unveiling of a new party manifesto showed that it had renewed and reinvigorated its efforts to improve governance in the country, enhance the role of the private sector as an engine of change and improve the quality of life of Filipinos.

Oreta said she believed the NPC would provide the push needed to bring about education reforms.

"Our country needs to move forward, not backward. We need to champion education in our country and sustain efforts to make our public school system globally competitive," she said.

Oreta said that with the new manifesto, the NPC can be considered a "pro-business, pro-education, principled and progressive" political party.

Cynthia D. Balana

Chavit misses Jinggoy in Senate 'raid'

By Cynthia D. Balana

CHAVIT'S CHARGE. Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson, escorted by an entourage of bodyguards, marches into the Senate to confront Sen. Jinggoy Estrada on his privilege speech Tuesday assailing the failure of the government to charge Singson of several graft charges.

ROGER MARGALLO

ILOCOS SUR GOV. LUIS "CHAVIT" Singson charged into the Senate yesterday to confront Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, whose privilege speech last week attacked the Arroyo administration for suspending opposition officials facing corruption charges but apparently letting proadministration local leaders like Singson go scot free.

Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago called Singson's visit a "raid."

No duel, however, took place. The young Estrada was not in his office yesterday morning.

Instead, Singson proceeded to the office of former action star Sen. Ramon "Bong Revilla and, in movie gangland style, asked Revilla to relay this message: "I dare him (Estrada) to say it again *para ipakita ko sa kanya na may batas tayo sa hindi marunong tumupad* (so I can show him that we have laws for those who do not know how to observe them)."

Singson, who announced plans to run for a Senate seat, confessed to being the bagman of illegal gambling payoffs to Malacañang Palace in 2001. His exposé led to an impeachment trial and the eventual overthrow of the senator's father, then President Joseph Estrada, in a people power revolt that brought then Vice President Gloria Arroyo to power.

In an "ambush interview" with reporters, Singson said he only came to hold up to Senator Estrada's face a certification from the Commission on Audit dated Feb. 3, 2006 showing that no corruption cases have been filed against him.

He let off a tirade against the young Estrada: *"Di yata niya alam ang sinasabi niya eh. Tumingin muna sila sa salamin bago sila magbintang sa ibang tao. Yung kaso ng tatay niya at iyung kaso niya hindi pa na*di-dismiss *dahil totoo iyon.* Plunder *iyon. Iyung* plunder *ibig sabihin pandarambong iyon. Iyon ang diprensiya namin. Di yata niya alam ang sinasabi niya* (He (Senator Estrada) apparently does not know what he is talking about. He should first look at a mirror before he accuses someone else. The case against his father, have not been dismissed because they are true. That's plunder. And plunder means public pillage. That's the difference between us. He does not know what he is talking about)."

But Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, a pistol sport enthusiast, said Singson's "raid" could have a "chilling effect on senators who don't have the physical courage to face people who are directly affected."

She said senators who deliver privilege speeches should take responsibility for their actions before their peers, not before the persons they are attacking.

"That would be a diminution of the concept of parliamentary immunity," said Santiago, who is herself known for critical and fiery speeches.

"People like that are allowed to come and raid a senator in his own office … I'm afraid I don't approve of that because it could have led to more adverse consequences. They could have come to blows, etcetera."

Ebdane says he's willing to take top Defense post

By Christine O. Avendaño
and Leila B. Salaverria

PUBLIC WORKS SECRETARY Hermogenes Ebdane yesterday expressed willingness to take on the job of a defense secretary if he was asked to do so, saying he had the "muscle memory" needed for the position.

"I'll be a hypocrite if I say I don't want it," Ebdane told reporters. "My training, experience and education was geared toward that end, having come from the armed services."

President Macapagal-Arroyo took over the defense portfolio in a concurrent capacity after then Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz resigned due to differences with some Cabinet members over Charter change.

Ebdane also brushed off objections to his possible appointment due to his being a retired general. He used to head the Philippine National Police.

While the Feliciano commission had recommended a civilian for the position of Defense Secretary, Ebdane told reporters that "in some situations there are requirements also for people who has the know-how, knowledge and experience on how to attend to specific problems of the military."

According to him, a person that comes from the armed service has an advantage should he be placed in charge of defense.

He said he believed the final decision on who will be the next defense chief "should be placed in the prevailing requirements of the situation."

Ebdane said the new defense chief should be able to decide quickly, or have "muscle memory,"—a person's ability to make fast decisions to attend to situations.

"In encounters, you don't have the privilege of time. Your reaction must be spontaneous and must be based on what's in your memory," he said.

Asked whether such muscle memory is needed now, he said "Yes, well I think I have that muscle memory of course, having been in the service before."

"Practically 90 percent of my training is with the armed forces. And I have even more training than the other officers who have retired in the military service," said Ebdane.

Executive Eduardo Ermita did not confirm whether Ebdane would indeed be the next defense chief, only saying that President Arroyo would make an "important" announcement of a new appointment.

GMA to promote Asean cause as she heads for Davos forum

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO will promote the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which she chairs this year, as a regional bloc to reckon with before world leaders gathered in the Swiss city of Davos for the World Economic Forum.

"Coming on the heels of our successful hosting of the Asean summit, the Davos meetings will enable the Philippines as Asean chair to present the emergence of the Asean community as a formidable bloc as it celebrates 40 years of existence," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a statement.

The President leaves today on her first foreign trip this year to attend the Davos forum which opens tomorrow.

Ms Arroyo will open the WEF's working luncheon on Friday whose theme is the "Asean economic road map," said Bunye.

Later that day, the President will address the forum and speak on "Asean's 40 years—A New Future."

Other Asian leaders who will also be speaking on Asean include Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi and Vietnamese President Nguyen Tan Dung.

"The participation of President Arroyo provides her with the opportunity as chair of the Asean to draw attention to the Asean agenda among global leaders and decision-makers and highlight the progress we are making towards economic integration," Bunye said in a statement.

At its 12th Summit of Leaders held in Cebu earlier this month, the 40-year-old grouping approved the first legally binding charter that would turn Asean into a legal entity with binding rules and regulations and end the tradition of consensus decision-making in all cases.

While in Switzerland, the President will be holding meetings with various business groups which have present or potential investments in the Philippines, according to Bunye. *Christine Avendaño*

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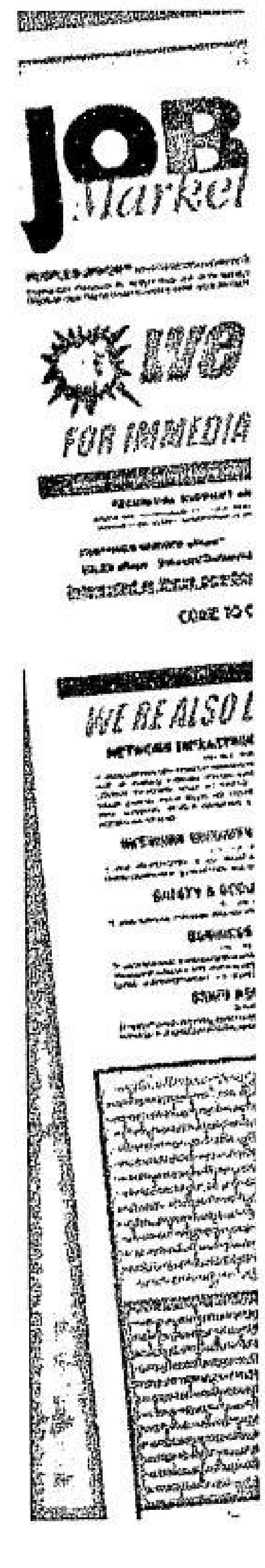

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Bush speech on Iraq draws int'l criticism

TOKYO—US PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush's State of the Union address on Wednesday got a stinging rebuke from Japan's defense minister and failed to impress critics who saw it as further evidence he has been politically weakened by the war in Iraq.

"President Bush's decision to enter the war against Iraq, based on the assumption that the weapons of mass destruction existed, was a mistake," Japanese Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma told reporters when asked about the speech at the Japan National Press Club in Tokyo.

But Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, a top supporter of the Bush policy in the Middle East, praised the president's proposal to add some 21,000 troops to US forces in Iraq.

"The increase in troops demonstrates America's strong determination to bring stability and recovery to Iraq," Abe told reporters after the speech. "I hope the United States' new measures are effective."

Despite Washington's recent decision to boost its troop dispatch in Iraq, Japan will not hastily decide how much longer it will support the international reconstruction efforts in the region, Kyuma said.

Japan pulled its 600 noncombat troops out of southern Iraq last year, but still offers humanitarian air support.

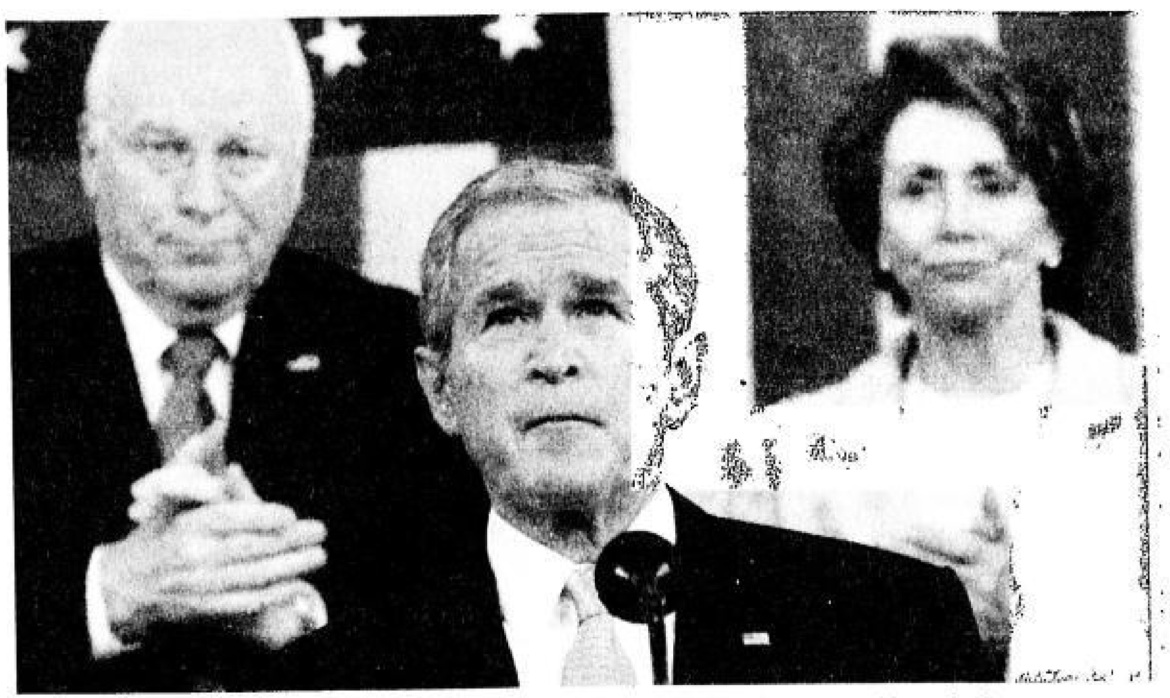
Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar, whose country chairs the 57-member Organization of the Islamic Conference, argued that further military might would not solve the sectarian conflict in Iraq.

"There is a divided America. Malaysia's position is there must be a clear timetable for exit (from Iraq)," he said. "The Iraqi conflict must be resolved by Iraqis, and if others want to get involved, it must be within the region."

In Pakistan, a lawmaker from a conservative religious alliance opposed to US policies in the region rejected Bush's plans and demanded that America withdraw its forces from both Iraq and Afghanistan.

"His speech will not be beneficial for peace in the world," said Liaqat Baluch, a prominent figure in Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal or United Action Forum Alliance, which is a strong opposition voice in Pakistan's Parliament.

"Our stand is that Iraq and Afghanistan are sovereign states and America has occupied them with its military power," Baluch said. "These troops should withdraw." *AP*



"MADAME SPEAKER," President Bush notes that he's the first US president to so address the first woman Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi (behind). At left is Vice President Dick Cheney. REUTERS

Bush seeks US Congress support; Democrats defiant

From page A1

pand health insurance coverage and to slash domestic gasoline consumption by 20 percent in a decade. *(See related story in The World, Page A20)*

Democrats and even some Republicans scoffed at Bush's Iraq policy. Unmoved by Bush's appeal, Democrats said the House and Senate would vote on resolutions of disapproval of the troop buildup.

"We need a new direction," said Sen. Jim Webb, who was picked by the Democrats to deliver their response to Bush.

"The majority of the nation no longer supports the way this war is being fought; nor does the majority of our military," Webb, a Vietnam veteran opposed to Bush's invasion of Iraq, said in his prepared remarks.

Republican Sen. Norm Coleman also took issue with Bush. "I can't tell you what the path to success is, but it's not what the president has put on the table," he said.

Bracing for rebuke

With Congress poised to deliver a stinging rebuke on his troop increase, Bush made a personal plea to lawmakers.

"I have spoken with many of you in person. I respect you and the arguments you made," he said. "We went into this largely united, in our assumptions and in our convictions. And whatever you voted for, you did not vote for failure."

"Our country is pursuing a new strategy in Iraq, and I ask you to give it a chance to work," Bush said. "And I ask you to support our troops in the field and those on their way."

Two Democratic leaders gave Bush a swift answer. "While the president continues to ignore the will of the country, Congress will not ignore this president's failed policy," Pelosi and Reid said in a joint statement after his address.

Bush said the Iraq war had changed dramatically with the outbreak of sectarian warfare and reprisals.

"This is not the fight we entered in Iraq, but it is the fight we are in," Bush said. "Every one of us wishes that this war were over and won. Yet it would not be like us to leave our promises unkept, our friends abandoned and our own security at risk.

"Ladies and gentlemen: On this day, at this hour, it is still within our power to shape the outcome of this battle," Bush said. "So let us find our resolve and turn events toward victory."

Reaching out

In his address, Bush reached out to Democrats, saying, "Congress has changed but our responsibilities have not. We are not the first to come here with government divided and uncertainty in the air. Like many before us, we can work through our differences and achieve big things for the American people."

Key Republicans have joined Democrats in drafting resolutions of opposition to the plans that Bush announced two weeks ago to send an additional 21,500 troops to Iraq.

Bush said his approach had the best chance to succeed, but clearly many lawmakers, and an overwhelming majority of Americans, disagree.

"Many in this chamber understand that America must not fail in Iraq because you understand that the consequences of failure would be grievous and far reaching," Bush said. "If American forces step back before Baghdad is secure, the Iraqi government would be overrun by extremists on all sides."

In such a case, he forecast "an epic battle," Shiite extremists backed by Iran against Sunni extremists aided by al-Qaida and supporters of executed former President Saddam Hussein, leading to violence that could spread across the Middle East.

"For America, this is a nightmare scenario," Bush said.

Republicans divided

Republican leaders generally expressed support for Bush's Iraq strategy. "If we fail in Iraq, or withdraw our troops prematurely, the terrorists will follow us home. Success is our only option," said Rep. John Boehner of Ohio.

But numerous members of the rank and file did little to hide their concern.

"To put more American personnel in harm's way without a realistic chance for success is something I'm not in favor of," said Republican Sen. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania. "And a realistic chance for success depends upon having the Iraqis with the will and the ability to fulfill their share of the bargain, and so far they have not."

Customary

As is customary, Republicans cheered longer and louder than Democrats when Bush walked down the middle aisle of the House chamber to deliver his annual address to Congress and the nation.

Bush's self-styled successors were sprinkled throughout the audience. One of them, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, a New York Democrat, sat one row behind another presidential aspirant, Democratic Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois. Neither one gave any indication the other was nearby. *AP*

FEELING RIGHT AT HOME in a Democratic-dominated Congress, President Bush makes a friendly gesture before his State of the Union address at the Capitol in Washington. AFP

BIPARTISAN APPLAUSE at certain points of Bush's address from Democratic Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, both of whom have declared their intentions to run for the presidency. Clinton is currently the front-runner in the race for the White House. Obama is the fastest-rising star of the Democratic Party. REUTERS

Palace sees release of 24 RP seamen soon

From page A1

(overseas Filipino workers) that the Philippine government will exhaust all available means to bring the victims home safely," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement yesterday.

"We are working closely with the Nigerian authorities who are on top of the situation and we are confident that they will be able to persuade the abductors to release the hostages unharmed," Bunye said.

In a briefing, Foreign Undersecretary Esteban Conejos said he believed the Filipinos, seized reportedly by militants of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta from the German-owned cargo ship Baco Liner II, would be freed in the next few days.

Temporary ban

Conejos noted that the Nigerian government had at least four similar cases last year which resulted in the Filipino hostages being set free in five to 11 days. "We expect to have the same results here," said Conejos.

Bunye said a temporary ban on the deployment of Filipinos to Nigeria would be in effect until the problem had been settled and Manila had been assured of the safety of its workers there.

"The government stands for the security and welfare of our OFWs anywhere in the world," said Bunye.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the government was leaving the negotiations entirely in the hands of the seamen's employer, including the possibility of paying ransom although this had not been confirmed.

The kidnappers were reported to have demanded the release of two Nigerian prisoners charged with treason in exchange for the seamen's freedom.

Assurance

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has assured President Macapagal-Arroyo that he will do everything possible to secure the Filipinos, said Department of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Eduardo Malaya.

Malaya said in a phone interview that Philippine Ambassador to Nigeria Masarangga Umpa met in Abuja on Monday night with Nigerian Foreign Minister Joy Ogwu who conveyed the Nigerian President's assurances.

Ogwu suggested that the negotiations for the release of the Filipinos be entrusted to the Nigerian government, Malaya said.

"We welcome the assurance made by the Nigerian President," Malaya said. "We will work with Nigerian authorities in seeking the quickest possible release of our abducted seafarers," Malaya said.

Safe and unharmed

Malaya said that information reaching the Philippine Embassy and the DFA so far indicated that the Filipino seamen were "unharmed and relatively safe."

"They have enough food and water provision. It is good for one month because it came from the stock of Baco Liner II," Malaya said.

He said Nigerian officials had also requested that the Philippines reconsider the temporary suspension of the deployment of Filipino workers to Nigeria.

Philippine Overseas Employment Administration Chief Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz said the suspension did not cover Filipino seamen on foreign ships entering Nigerian waters.

She said that the foreign ship owners should make sure that their Filipino crew are safe when entering Nigerian waters.

Some 4,000 Filipinos are working in Nigeria, mostly in its oil-rich region where foreign workers had been the target of kidnappings by militant groups.

Repatriation ruled out

Also yesterday, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration chief Marianito Roque ruled out the repatriation of OFWs from Nigeria, at least for now. He said current and previous abduction cases of OFWs were isolated incidents.

"Repatriation is not being considered at this time but the security alert has been elevated for our workers, especially those who could be assigned to hazardous areas," Roque told reporters.

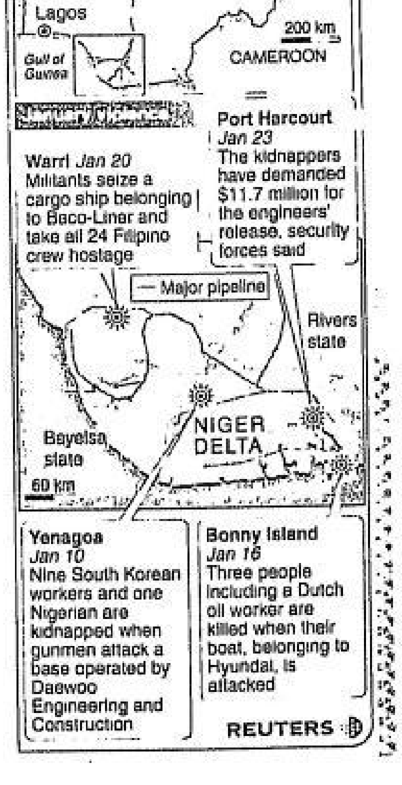
Roque noted that the Filipinos' vessel had no security escort when it entered the Niger River estuary to deliver equipment for an oil exploration facility in the river delta.

He said agencies had been told to exercise caution in assigning OFWs to Nigeria. *With a report from Jerome Aning*

NIGERIA KIDNAP

Gunmen demanding a ransom kidnapped two engineers, one American and one British, on their way to work on Tuesday in Nigeria's oil city Port Harcourt authorities said

The abduction brings to 29 the number of foreign workers held by armed groups in the remote swamps of the Niger delta



NIGER
NIGERIA
BENIN
AFRICA
Abuja
Lagos
Gulf of Guinea
200 km
CAMEROON
Port Harcourt
Jan 23
The kidnappers have demanded $11.7 million for the engineers' release, security forces said
Warri Jan 20
Militants seize a cargo ship belonging to Baco-Liner and take all 24 Filipino crew hostage
Major pipeline
Rivers state
Bayelsa state
NIGER DELTA
60 km
Yenagoa
Jan 10
Nine South Korean workers and one Nigerian are kidnapped when gunmen attack a base operated by Daewoo Engineering and Construction
Bonny Island
Jan 16
Three people including a Dutch oil worker are killed when their boat, belonging to Hyundai, is attacked
REUTERS

Corrections

IN THE JAN. 22 issue, the front-page banner story—"Prayers doomed Janjalani"—carried erroneous information on the gun battle between Khadaffy Janjalani's Abu Sayyaf group and a Marine reconnaissance platoon last Sept. 4, 2006. The battle took place in Patikul—not Indanan—Sulu.

* * *

IN EARLIER COPIES of the Jan. 23 issue, the word "alleged" was inadvertently omitted from a caption of a Page A7 photo of Abra Gov. Vicente Valera. The caption's last sentence should have read: "Valera is the alleged mastermind in the slaying of Abra Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. and his bodyguard last Dec. 16."

* * *

IN THE JAN. 24 ISSUE, a window on Page A21 of the Sports section misspelled the first name of a woman tennis player who had made it to the Australian Open semifinals. The woman player's first name is Serena—not Serenas—Williams.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Lorna Kalaw Tirol, readers' advocate, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com. ph or fax Nos. 897-47-93/94, Attn: Readers Advocate. Her phone number is 897-8808 Local 342.

Top Bush aide arrives for visit

By Nikko Dizon and Julie S. Alipala, *Inquirer Mindanao*

A HIGH-RANKING WASHINGTON OFFICIAL arrived yesterday in Manila for a three-day visit that would include a meeting with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Karen Hughes, Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs and a long-time advisor to US President George W. Bush, arrived at around 11 a.m. at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) 1 via Cathay Pacific flight CX 901.

The war on terrorism and counterterrorism measures will be among the issues Hughes will discuss with Ms Arroyo, Matthew Lussenhop, US Embassy spokesperson, said in a phone interview.

Lussenhop said he had no knowledge if Hughes would discuss the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) with President Arroyo.

Lussenhop said Hughes was scheduled to fly to Jolo, Sulu today to visit some projects being financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAid) and to meet with US military troops in Sulu, who are now preoccupied with preparations for the upcoming Balikatan exercises.

The US official is expected to personally extend Washington's praises for the Filipino soldiers involved in the clashes that led to the deaths of Abu Sayyaf leaders Khadaffy Janjalani and Jainal Antel Sali alias Abu Sulaiman.

Brig. Gen. Ruperto Pabustan, chief of the Joint Special Operations Forces, said he was happy the US government has recognized the military's effort against terror.

Maj. John Redfield, public affairs officer of the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines, told the INQUIRER that Hughes would want to interact with the US forces and see the Balikatan projects in Sulu.

HUGHES

Hughes will also meet with a number of alumni of the US exchange diplomacy program, Lussenhop said.

On Friday, Hughes will join US and Filipino veterans for a brief ceremony at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial in Fort Bonifacio.

Appointed in July 2005, Hughes oversees three bureaus at the US State Department, namely: Educational and Cultural Affairs; Public Affairs; and International Information Programs.

Hughes was a broadcast journalist before joining the Bush administration.

She served as Counselor to the President during Bush's first 18 months in office where she was involved in major domestic and foreign policy issues, led the communications effort in the first year of the war against terror, and managed the White House Offices of Communications, Media Affairs, Speechwriting and Press Secretary.

Senate, House OK budget at bicam

AFTER A PROLONGED DEADLOCK, the Senate and the House of Representatives yesterday signed the bicameral committee report on the proposed P1.126-trillion national budget for 2007 during ceremonies held at Club Filipino in San Juan.

Sen. Franklin Drilon, chair of the Senate finance committee, said the budget bill could be ratified by both chambers and be presented to President Macapagal-Arroyo for signature before Congress adjourns on Feb. 10.

The bicameral conference committee report was signed by Drilon and his counterpart in the Lower House, Albay Rep. Joey Salceda.

Drilon said the budget measure would finally address the shortage problem of public school teachers and classrooms, and provide the needed funds to improve services in public health.

He said it would also provide for a P10-billion calamity fund for the reconstruction of areas devastated by recent typhoons and grant Malacañang the authority to use unprogrammed funds to pay long-overdue salary increases to government workers.

The earlier deadlock on the budget bill was broken after Drilon and Salceda forged a compromise agreement on a contentious P4.7 billion school feeding program. *Cynthia D. Balana*

WWF seeks deeper probe of Chinese poachers

THE WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE (WWF) wants a further investigation of the case of three Chinese shipping vessels and 30 Chinese fishermen caught poaching in Philippine waters last December.

WWF-Philippines president Jose Ma. Lorenzo Tan said the Chinese poachers could be part of an organized crime syndicate, which would make the incident a test case for Philippine-China diplomatic relations.

Tan said the WWF tried to trace the owners of the three vessels caught poaching in the waters off the Tubbataha Reef Nature Park in Palawan last month, all of which claimed to be based in Hong Kong.

But when the WWF checked, it was found that the companies that owned the boats were not even registered in Hong Kong, Tan said.

Tan said that most of the vessels' crew were from mainland China and acted the way they did "knowing that the [Chinese] Embassy would protect them."

"There is a possible angle of organized crime. We are seeking the help of the National Bureau of Investigation on this. This is not just a simple case of poaching in our territorial waters," said Tan.

The 30 Chinese poachers, who were caught in the Tubbataha Reef with a large number of live fish shortly before Christmas, were released after spending only a few hours in jail after the Chinese Embassy demanded it in a letter to Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo and Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap.

Some of the live fish that were found in the poachers' possession included about 300 Napoleon wrasse, known by its local name of *mameng*. It is listed as an endangered species but is offered as expensive fare in Chinese restaurants.

Concerned members of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, led by lawyer Christian Monsod, brought the case to the Supreme Court. *Christine Gaylican*

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, January 25, 2007
Conversion of St. Paul
1st Reading: Acts 22:3-16 (or Acts 9:1-22)
Gospel: Mark 16:15-18

Jesus appeared to the Eleven and said to them, "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; the one who refuses to believe will be condemned. Signs like these will accompany those who have believed: in my Name they will cast out demons and speak new languages; they will pick up snakes and, if they drink anything poisonous, they will be unharmed. They will lay their hands on the sick and they will be healed."

Commentary

Acts 22—Paul's history before encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus was persecuting and arresting Christians—this is the only Jesus, the Body of Christ that Paul ever met and knew—the Crucified in the community of believers. And in the light of the Word of God he is missioned and told to be baptized and forgiven. It is the story of each of our own conversions, over and over again in our lives.

Acts 9—In this version of the story, Saul must obey and go into the city and learn from those he has persecuted what he must do to be forgiven, saved, and converted. Others in the community are sent to Saul to help him change and learn the ways of Jesus. It is fraught with violence/fear and insecurity, for the Church must seek out and help those who have harmed them. And Saul's conversion took a lot longer than the change of his name to Paul.

Conversion to the Gospel, to the good news of Jesus Christ who heals and saves, forgives and accompanies his community, the Church, throughout all history, is what we are called to preach and to be ever more converted to daily, both as individual believers and as the company of Jesus' disciples. None of us goes home alone, we go in Jesus' company and we are to be light, blinding searing light for the entire world.

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 5246, series of 2006

Judge orders Leviste case reinvestigated

From page A1

fair order. This court is directing the city prosecutor of Makati to conduct a reinvestigation of this case and to submit its recommendation within ... 30 days."

It is the judge who will determine whether the recommendation—be it an upgrade of the charge or an affirmation of the original indictment for homicide lodged by city prosecutors—should be adopted.

A grim-faced Leviste later inched his way out of the packed courtroom with a nurse and an aide close to his side.

His voice hardly audible in the media frenzy, he mustered a few words for the bereaved family: "I would like to express my deepest condolence to the family and I wish that they could build from the ruins of this unfortunate incident."

Prejudgment

Alameda earlier heard arguments from the contending camps, with defense counsel Manuel Singson saying that the reinvestigation should not proceed because Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez had prejudged the case as indicated by his statements to the media.

(Speaking with reporters last week, Gonzalez suggested an element of murder in the shooting: "The number of shots fired shows there is evident premeditation [on Leviste's part] because if you just want to maim somebody without really an intent to kill, you will not fire more than one shot." De las Alas' body had multiple gunshot wounds, including one at the back of the head.)

Singson told the court that Gonzalez had "already decided on national television that the case should be murder, not homicide..."

"The justice secretary has already said there is evident premeditation, there is treachery. That's why they (investigation prosecutors) have to sustain that," Singson said.

"We feel that the accused will not get any justice with this reinvestigation," he said, eliciting murmurs from the other half of the courtroom, where members of the De las Alas family and anti-crime volunteers were seated.

VICTIM'S FAMILY members in court including daughter Dinna de las Alas steer clear of Leviste, who tried to come closer. The De las Alas family are seeking to upgrade the charges from homicide to murder and to reinvestigate the case.

REM ZAMORA

'Not my conscience'

In response, Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco, designated officer in charge of the Makati City Prosecutor's Office and head of the review team, said: "The secretary of justice is not my conscience."

But Singson retorted that the reinvestigation was predestined to adopt an upgrade of the homicide charge to murder, adding that the prosecution's motion seeking the deferment of the arraignment had been "tailor-made" to fit Gonzalez's statement.

Alameda intervened at this point, saying: "All right, the court has already issued an order. No more arguments."

But Singson said the defense would appeal the order for reinvestigation, a move that the judge called "a prerogative" of the opposing counsel.

Leviste's camp had wanted to make a final attempt to have the reinvestigation suspended pending its planned appeal, but Alameda said he could not allow this without the defense first filing a written plea for reconsideration.

Henry Capela, another defense lawyer, said he believed that the judge was "feeling a certain pressure" to immediately resolve the De las Alas family's request for a review.

He also said the defense team was not required to file a written plea before the court could resolve it.

In any case, he said, the reinvestigation should not proceed until the court had resolved the defense's appeal, or else prosecutors "would be violating due process."

What really happened

Elaborating off-court on his earlier point, Velasco said the review was aimed at "see[ing] the true picture of what really happened" because prosecutors "could not just rely on [Leviste's] confession."

"In this reinvestigation, we are not necessarily clinging to the argument of the private prosecutor that [the charge] should be elevated to murder. We'd like to see what really happened and who was the real culprit," he said, adding:

"Secretary Gonzalez can speak all the things he wants but he is not my conscience. I have my own mind; I will bear my ruling on evidence that will be presented and based on our jurisprudence, not on what the secretary or any [other] person will say."

Velasco said he had summoned Leviste, Supt. Gilbert Cruz (the Makati police chief), crime scene investigators and agents of the National Bureau of Investigation who earlier heeded the De las Alas family's request for a parallel investigation of the shooting, to the preliminary hearing scheduled on Jan. 31.

He said other Leviste employees who might have something to add to witness accounts would also be invited to attend.

Velasco said Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, to whom Leviste surrendered some three hours after the shooting, might likewise be summoned.

Confined at the Makati Medical Center since the shooting until Alameda ordered him released, Leviste left the hospital last weekend after posting bail of P40,000.

Crime scene inspection

Reynaldo Esmeralda, NBI deputy director for regional operations services, said bureau agents were preparing to conduct an ocular inspection at the LPL Towers next week.

He said Velasco had instructed his team to visit the crime scene in connection with the reinvestigation ordered by Judge Alameda.

"We want to determine what really happened there," Esmeralda told reporters, adding that Leviste would be asked to "reenact" the shooting.

Through photographs taken by crime scene operatives, the NBI National Capital Region Office headed by Ruel Lasala will also determine the positions of De las Alas' firearm and liquor bottles.

Esmeralda said the team would also seek to determine whether other people were present at the crime scene, to examine the possibility that another person could have shot De las Alas, and to establish the identities of other people at the office when the shooting occurred.

"We want to ask them how many shots they heard and the immediate reactions of Leviste and his aide," Esmeralda said.

Leviste is now on the Bureau of Immigration's watch list, with Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. signing the order yesterday morning upon the directive of the Department of Justice.

Fernandez said the order would prevent Leviste from leaving the country without DOJ clearance. *With reports from Margaux C. Ortiz and Leila B. Salaverria*

5 activists killed in Bicol

From page A1

husband was a former New People's Army member or part of any leftist organization. He was just an ordinary coconut farmer, she said.

Shot in front of 2-yr-old son

"I knew my husband was already dead but they still shot him several times. How could they kill my husband in front of my 2-year-old son? They treated my husband like an animal and did not give him a fair chance to fight back. He was defenseless!" Cristine said.

Bayan Muna leaders have accused the Arroyo administration of condoning the murders, allegedly by security forces.

"Almost all deaths in Sorsogon are being blamed on us. Those accusing us should file a formal complaint in the proper forum and that would be the time we would answer them," said Brig. Gen. Arsenio Arugay, 9th Infantry Division commander.

Bayan Muna appeal

In a statement yesterday, Bayan Muna leaders appealed to the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) to include the issue of rampant and intensifying killings in the country on their agenda.

They called for "justice to the families of the victims of extrajudicial killings, and the worldwide uproar over the ongoing slaughter of innocent, unarmed and noncombatant activists and other individuals in the country, especially in the light of the coming May elections.

Dayandate and Camero "bore gunshot wounds in the bodies and both were believed to have been killed elsewhere and dumped in Ligao City to mislead the investigation," Padilla said.

They were reported missing last week, Padilla said. "We are still investigating the motive and identities of the killers," he said.

Circumstantial evidence

"Circumstantial evidence points to the military," said Neri Colmenares, a lawyer for Bayan Muna who took part in a small protest against the killings in front of the national military headquarters in Manila.

"Our protest is not only against the continuing killings but also against the government's lack of political will to prosecute the perpetrators," he said.

A military spokesperson for Southern Luzon, Lt. Col. Rhederick Parayno, denied security forces had a hand in the killings, and said one of the victims, Imperial, was spying on communist rebels for the military.

"The one who has a reason to kill him is the other side," Parayno said, referring to the rebels.

An ordinary farmer

The military often claims that many victims of unsolved killings were gunned down during internal purges within the communist movement. But human rights groups, foreign businesses and the European Union have continued to press the Philippine government to do more to punish the killers.

"We expect that as the elections near, there will be a rise in political killings," said Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo. "They will continue with the killings with the hope that Bayan Muna will be crippled in the elections." *Reports from Bobby Q. Labaian and Ephraim Aguilar, Inquirer Southern Luzon; and AP*

Political EQ 101: How to win an election

From page A1

Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson? Welcome to Political EQ 101.

Educator and motivational speaker Henry Tenedero has begun a lecture tour for political candidates on emotional intelligence and how to win votes using various international learning styles that he has acquired through the years.

"Leaders should first be communicators. Many political candidates forget that," he said.

Tenedero, head of the Center for Learning and Teaching Styles Inc., said some of the senatorial candidates had that edge while others had to work hard to at least fake it.

Erap high EQ

"By his name alone, Chiz Escudero has an edge because his nickname is what we say when we want people to smile on camera and he does smile a lot," he said.

In 1998, Tenedero predicted then Vice President Joseph Estrada would win that year's presidential election because he had the highest EQ (emotional intelligence quotient) among the candidates.

Tenedero defined EQ as the "ability, capacity, or skill to perceive, assess and manage the emotions of one's self and others, and, for political reasons, of the audience."

He said other senatorial aspirants with "high EQ" were Manila Mayor Lito Atienza and Singson.

"The administration's [possible] lineup got a boost when Chavit (Singson) came in because he instills a 'pleasant fear' among the voters," Tenedero said.

According to the educator, Singson may sometimes sound aggressive but the image he presents is he can help change the government.

Tenedero said Atienza had learned from the late Sen. Raul Roco the importance of wearing Hawaiian shirts "to evoke happy thoughts."

Know the audience

But the most important lesson for politicians is knowing their audience, Tenedero said.

He cited nine elements crucial to the politician's learning styles—light, sound, design, temperature, emotional, perceptual and sociological preferences, intake and mobility.

"If you want to reach your constituents, your message has to be delivered in a variety of ways because everyone absorbs information differently. Citizens relate to you depending on the luck of the draw—whether their learning styles match or do not match the way you deliver your message," Tenedero said.

He said bright lights increased audience perception. He said in some business conferences where speakers use projectors under dim lights, some in the audience tended to doze off. He said the secret was to keep the lights on.

He said politicians should know if their audience prefer loud noise or music during political rallies. Young people tend not to mind loud noise, Tenedero said.

Making jingles

Tenedero said he would teach political candidates how to make their jingles during a series of seminars starting this week in Metro Manila.

The young also want an "informal design" when a politician reaches out to them, he said. The approach deviates from the conference hall-type meeting using rows of chairs for the audience and a table and rostrum for the speaker.

"Temperature," he said, means whether the audience can respond even if it is very cold or very warm.

"Perceptual preferences," he said, mean knowing if the audience wanted textual or visual aids.

"When you talk, the odds are strong that less than 20 percent of your audience will remember three-fourths of what you say. When you distribute printed materials, no more than 30 percent of the readers will remember much of what they read," he said.

"Emotional" means the preference of the audience for being nonconformist, while "sociological" is preference to learn alone or in a team.

Republic of the Philippines
CITY OF BAIS
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The City Government of Bais invites interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the supply and delivery of the hereunder requirements:

ITEM	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT (ABC)
1. PR # 35-07 – Various const. & electrical equipment & materials for improvement of lighting system at strategic locations at the city proper, to be taken from 20% Development Fund	P 2,673,875.00

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

In order to qualify, bidders should conform to the eligibility criteria as prescribed under Section 23.11 of the IRR-A of RA 9184

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria as specified in the IRR-A of R.A. 9184. As such non-submission of the required documents will result in the disqualification of the bidder.

All other particulars relative to the procurement process shall be governed by the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 9184 otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act.

Bid documents can be obtained upon payment of a non-refundable fee equivalent to the total amount of the ABC of the items in which interested bidders intend to bid, in accordance with the following rates:

Below P50,000.00	– 0.5% but not less than P100.00
P50,000.00 but not more than P100,000.00	– 0.45% but not less than P250.00
P100,001.00 but not more than P200,000.00	– 0.4% but not less than P450.00
P200,001.00 – P350,000.00	– 0.35% but not less than P800.00
P350,001.00 – P500,000.00	– 0.3% but not less than P1,225.00
P500,001.00 – P1,000,000.00	– 0.2% but not less than P1,500.00
P1,000,001.00 and above	– 0.1% but not less than P2,000.00 and not more than P10,000.00

Bid documents can be obtained at the BAC Secretariat c/o Office of the City Mayor or Office of the City General Services, this city, Tel. Nos. (035) 402-3182, or 402-8115, anytime during office hours; and can also be inquired for further information or particulars

Pre-Bid Conference will be held on February 2, 2007 at 1:30 p.m. at the Conference Room, Office of the City Mayor.

The bidders shall drop their duly accomplished eligibility, technical, and financial documents each in separate sealed envelopes duly marked as such in the bid box at the Conference Room at the Office of the City Mayor on February 13, 2007 at 1:30 p.m. at which place, date and time said envelopes shall be opened in the presence of the members of the BAC, the attending bidders, the observers, or their duly authorized representative. Late bids shall not be accepted.

The City Government of Bais reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all bids at anytime prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

(Sgd.) CARMELINO L. MORALES
(City General Services Officer)
BAC Chairman

(PDI–Jan. 25 & 30, 2007)

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S
FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
WEI YIENG GARMENTS (MANILA) COMPANY, INC. Km. 23, West Service Road, South Super Hi-way, Cupang, Muntinlupa City	Szu-Chieh Chen	Vice-President
JGC PHILIPPINES, INC. 2109 Prime St., Madrigal Bus. Park Ayalang Alabang, Muntinlupa City	Shinichiro Yumoto	Site Manager
ACCENTURE, INC. MSE Bldg., Ayala Ave., Makati City	Arwin Hausjah Leyarda	Project Analyst
ACCENTURE, INC. MSE Bldg., Ayala Ave., Makati City	Agung Widodo	Project Analyst
GERMAN HYDRAULIC & PLANT SVC. INC. U-2 Southway Bldg., Yakal cor. Mayapis Sts., San Antonio Village, Makati City	Sebastian Scholer	Technical Supervisor for Engineering and Hydraulics Department
ACCENTURE, INC. MSE Bldg., Ayala Ave., Makati City	Markus Andreas Knoke	Consultant
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LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI - Jan. 25, 2007)

No overkill in Iloilo, PNP probe team says

By Alcuin Papa

THERE WAS NO "OVERKILL" BY LAW enforcers in the Iloilo incident and police used "reasonable response" in dealing with supporters of Iloilo Gov. Niel Tupas Sr.

These were the conclusions reached by a fact-finding team of the Philippine National Police (PNP) sent to Iloilo to investigate allegations that policemen used "excessive force" and violated police procedures when they stormed the provincial capitol building on Jan. 17 to evict Tupas and his supporters.

Members of the Iloilo police Regional Mobile Group (RMG) forcibly entered the building to eject Tupas, who was holed up with his supporters in defiance of a suspension order from the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG).

Television footage showing RMG members pointing their guns at civilians inside the provincial capitol sparked outrage.

Far from being an overkill

The fact-finding team sent by PNP chief Director General Oscar Calderon was headed by Director Edgardo Doromal, chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG).

Doromal said the response of the Iloilo police was "far from being an overkill as claimed by opposition quarters." He said the PNP fielded 200 policemen against an estimated 1,000 supporters of Tupas "with the support of heavily armed men holed up inside the building."

"The PNP contingent of some 200 combined elements of the CDMG (Civil Disturbance Management Group) and the RMG was the smallest possible force deployed to the Capitol, where they were clearly outnumbered by about a thousand supporters of the governor, a significant number of whom presumed to be armed," Doromal said.

Safe passageway

The CIDG also said police "observed standard procedures" in dispersing Tupas' supporters and that it was the governor's supporters, led by his son, Board Member Niel Tupas Jr., who initiated the scuffle with police.

Doromal also said that entry and exit points of the provincial capitol were sealed by Tupas' supporters "trapping numerous civilians inside who wanted to leave when the police started moving to enter the building."

"Fearful of a stampede that could severely hurt or even kill many of these trapped civilians, the RMG team had no recourse but to break glass panels to provide a safe passageway for them," said Doromal in a statement to media.

He also reiterated that Tupas' supporters had included armed provincial jail guards, security guards and members of leftists organizations who had declared their support for the governor.

The presence of these armed groups inside the provincial capitol was documented by police in affidavits executed by "a number of witnesses who were trapped inside the building." Police also obtained documents that showed Tupas Jr. was in possession of nine firearms including assault rifles.

No single shot fired

Doromal also clarified that policemen did not point their guns at Tupas' son and daughter as shown on TV "but were merely asking them to halt and sit down."

"While everyone had complied with the order, one of their companions suddenly stood up, prompting one member of the RMG contingent to respond in accordance with police operational procedures when met with civilians who were either resisting or refusing to cooperate with lawmen," he said.

Doromal added: "What was important was that no single shot was fired and no physical injury was reported during the incident."

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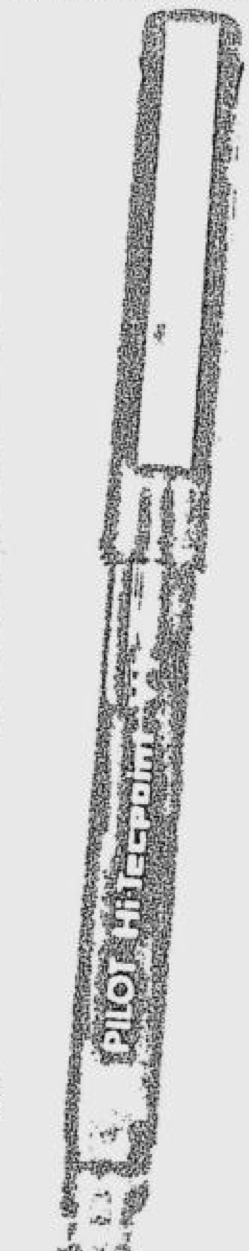

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Manila Water is currently upgrading its distribution lines and facilites to improve the distribution of water in the East Zone. We regret that there will be two temporary water supply interruptions. The first interruption is due to the calibration of supply and pressure of mainlines. The temporary cutoff will start 8:00 a.m., Thursday, January 25, 2007, up to 5:00 p.m., Friday, January 26. Areas affected portions will be: Barangays Kabayanan, Maytunas, Sta. Lucia, Addition Hills, Batis, Tibagan and Onse in San Juan; Barangays Daang Bakal, Bagong Silang, Hagdang Bato Itaas, Hagdang Bato Libis, Burol, Harapin ang Bukas, Pagasa, Poblacion, New Zaniga, San Jose, Mabini-J. Rizal, Old Zaniga, Namayan, Vergara, Hulo, Plainview and Barangka in Mandaluyong City and Barangays 892 to 905, Punta, Sta. Ana, Manila.

Meanwhile, there will be a second interruption which will affect portions of Quezon City starting 10:00 p.m., Thursday, January 25, up to 6:00 a.m., Friday, January 26. The temporary cutoff is due to the installation of a large new valve at the Cubao Pumping Station. Affected areas will be: Kamuning, Roxas District, Sacred Heart, Laging Handa, Paligsahan, Obrero, South Triangle, Project 2, Project 3, East Kamias, West Kamias, and Piñahan.

Manila Water Company advises all residents of the said areas to store enough water prior to the scheduled interruptions to avoid inconvenience.

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Atong sings, junks Erap

From page A1

In exchange, Ang would assist in the prosecution of cases "in which he has personal knowledge."

The court will decide next week whether to accept the plea bargain agreement, Villa-Ignacio said.

Estrada is facing plunder charges for allegedly amassing some P4 billion in payoffs from illegal gambling operations, tobacco tax kickbacks and commissions.

He also is charged with perjury for allegedly falsely declaring his assets.

The deposed leader has denied any wrongdoing and accused his successor, President Macapagal-Arroyo, of conspiring with the country's elite, Roman Catholic Church leaders and some senior military officers to oust him.

"We are happy with this development. This agreement confirms the allegations covered in our charge sheet against (Estrada)," Villa-Ignacio said.

Estrada has been on trial for plunder since he was ousted in 2001.

At the impeachment trial of Estrada in late 2000 and at his plunder trial at the Sandiganbayan, Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson said Ang delivered the P130 million in tobacco excise taxes to the President's residence on Polk Street in North Greenhills, San Juan, in 1998.

"I'm already excited on how the court will decide on this agreement," Singson said.

Singson claimed that P70 million went to Estrada, P20 million to his spouse, Dr. Luisa Ejercito Estrada, P15 million to their son Jinggoy, and P25 million to Ang.

Surprised

In open court, Ang's lawyer, Alfredo Villamor, yesterday submitted the plea bargain agreement to the Sandiganbayan special division trying Estrada, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, lawyer Edward Serapio and Ang for plunder.

"This is provided for under the Rules of Court. This is also encouraged by the judiciary. There is no legal impediment against this agreement," Villa-Ignacio said.

The plea bargain agreement was recommended for approval by Ang, Villamor, Villa-Ignacio and Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño.

It was approved by Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez.

When Villamor and Villa-Ignacio presented the court with the deal, Flaminiano's reaction clearly showed that he had no inkling of the prosecution's coup.

"We want a copy of the deal because our client might be implicated," Flaminiano said in court.

"The official who was corrupted may be President Estrada," he said.

Strong case

Ang was seen shaking his head when he heard Flaminiano's remarks on the potentially adverse implications of the deal on Estrada's defense.

After Ang's extradition from the United States last November, Villa-Ignacio said the government did not need Ang's testimony because the prosecution already had a strong case against Estrada and expected a conviction of the deposed leader.

The special prosecutor yesterday said the Ang deal did not mean that the prosecution had a weak case.

"It's the opposite. The case is quite strong. Why would Atong Ang enter into a plea bargaining agreement with the government if its case is weak?" Villa-Ignacio said.

"He thinks that defending his case is an exercise in futility. Why take the risk of going through a plunder trial when you can get away with just (six years in prison)? This is his consideration," he said.

Villa-Ignacio said the contents of the plea bargain agreement was already enough to go into the records of the criminal proceedings against Estrada and his fellow accused.

He said there was no more need for Ang to execute an affidavit or take the stand to tell the court the allegations in the plea bargain agreement.

"That's already it," Villa-Ignacio said.

He said that the prosecution panel would use the damning information the deal provided as evidence and that it no longer wanted Ang to take the stand to testify on the agreement's contents.

Hearsay

In contrast with Villa-Ignacio's views, Villamor said the plea bargain agreement containing information that Ang conspired with Estrada to divert P130 million would not prejudice the case of the deposed leader.

"The contents of the agreement, as far as President Estrada's case is concerned, are just hearsay unless my client testifies in court and is subjected to cross-examination," he said.

Villamor made the statement in open court after an Estrada lawyer, Jay Flaminiano, asked for a copy of the plea bargain deal because it might implicate the former President.

Flaminiano, who showed up in court only to observe the proceedings against Ang, asked the court to give the Estrada defense panel a chance to comment on whether the deal should be favored by the Sandiganbayan.

"[Villamor is] just saying that because (Flaminiano) flared up," Villa-Ignacio said.

He said the deal was highly confidential due to security concerns.

"I even had to apologize to the members of the (prosecution) panel because they were also surprised (by the turn of events)," Villa-Ignacio said.

The Sandiganbayan special division composed of its chair, Presiding Justice Teresita de Castro, and Associate Justices Diosdado Peralta and Francisco Villaruz, is expected to decide on whether to honor the plea bargain on Monday.

Weak

"[The contents of the plea bargain deal are] hearsay as far as the defense is concerned. (The deal) will not affect our client's case," said Estrada spokesperson Rufus Rodriguez, a lawyer, after the pre-trial proceedings.

"They can present [the allegations in the agreement] if they decide to present rebuttal evidence," Rodriquez said.

"But that will mean they have a weak case against President Estrada that they have to resort to taking in Atong Ang's testimony," he said.

Rodriguez said Ang's allegation about the P130-million payoff on Polk Street ran counter to Ang's statement before the Senate in October 2000 when he branded as "a lie" Singson's account of the delivery.

The Estrada spokesperson also said Ang's tale in the plea bargain deal was contrary to the defense contention that it was physically impossible for a person to bring in P130 million in thousand-peso bills because its weight would be comparable to two-and-a-half sacks of rice.

"It will not prejudice our case because of these two [previous developments]," Rodriguez said.

No coercion

He said Estrada "is very sorry for Atong Ang."

"He has been subjected to so much pressure for three years. There has been so much intimidation and pressure as early as when he was in Las Vegas and when he was brought to Manila," Rodriguez said.

At yesterday's hearing, the justices asked Ang if he was coerced into entering into the plea bargain.

"No," was his courteous reply.

If the court finds Ang guilty of bribery, it may impose a penalty higher than his offer of P25 million, according to Villaruz.

That and the consequences of the deal seemed fine with Ang.

Jeans

"He has his reasons [for entering into the deal]," Villamor said after the proceedings.

"If he already turned his back on (Estrada), I wouldn't want to go into that," he added.

Ang arrived at the courtroom in brown shirt and jeans. He was escorted by a squad of jail guards.

Ang and one of his defense lawyers, Ruth Castelo, engaged Flaminiano in light banter before the proceedings started in the area reserved for the accused and defense lawyers.

Erap: I'm the last man standing for the truth

From page A1

or offered irresistible concessions.

"I heard that he is able to come out (of the Metro Manila District Jail, where Ang is detained) at night," he said.

With the deal with government prosecutors, Ang joins the ranks of witnesses who were coerced by the government into giving false testimony against its foes, according to Estrada.

Other witnesses

The deposed leader mentioned witnesses, like Udong Mahusay, who in 2003 executed an affidavit implicating First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo in alleged corrupt practices. Mahusay recanted his statements after he met with Michael Defensor, now the presidential chief of staff.

"(Ang) went to the US to avoid the pressures regarding the plunder case. In the end, he capitulated," Estrada said.

He recalled that Ang was firm in denying the payoff when then opposition Sen. Loren Legarda cross-examined him about the P130-million tax kickbacks in October 2000 during a Senate inquiry into the then President's alleged corrupt activities.

"At that time, he was quite firm that no payoff happened," Estrada said.

Nonetheless, Estrada said he was confident of the evidence his lawyers had submitted for his defense.

"The deal will not affect us legally," Estrada said.

Ang offers Corinthian mansion as payment

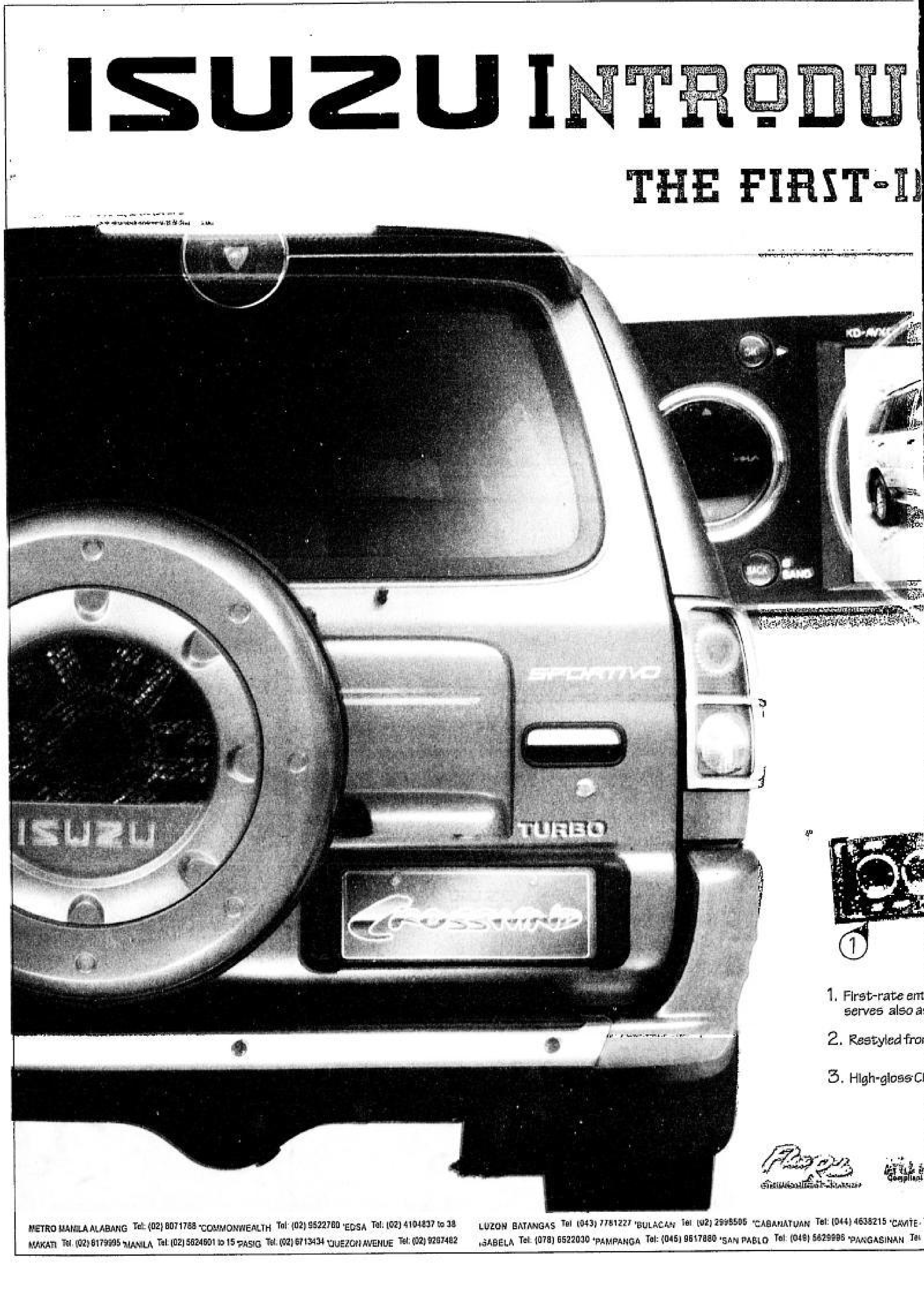
From page A1

cise taxes that Estrada allegedly illegally appropriated for himself, according to prosecutors.

"Transfer of the same to the government shall, therefore, be decreed with the judgment emanating from this plea bargaining agreement," said the deal.

"In any event, accused Charlie 'Atong' Ang shall, as a further condition, execute any and all documents and papers consistent with the purposes of this plea bargaining agreement and to fulfill such purposes," the document said.

Norman Bordadora and AFP



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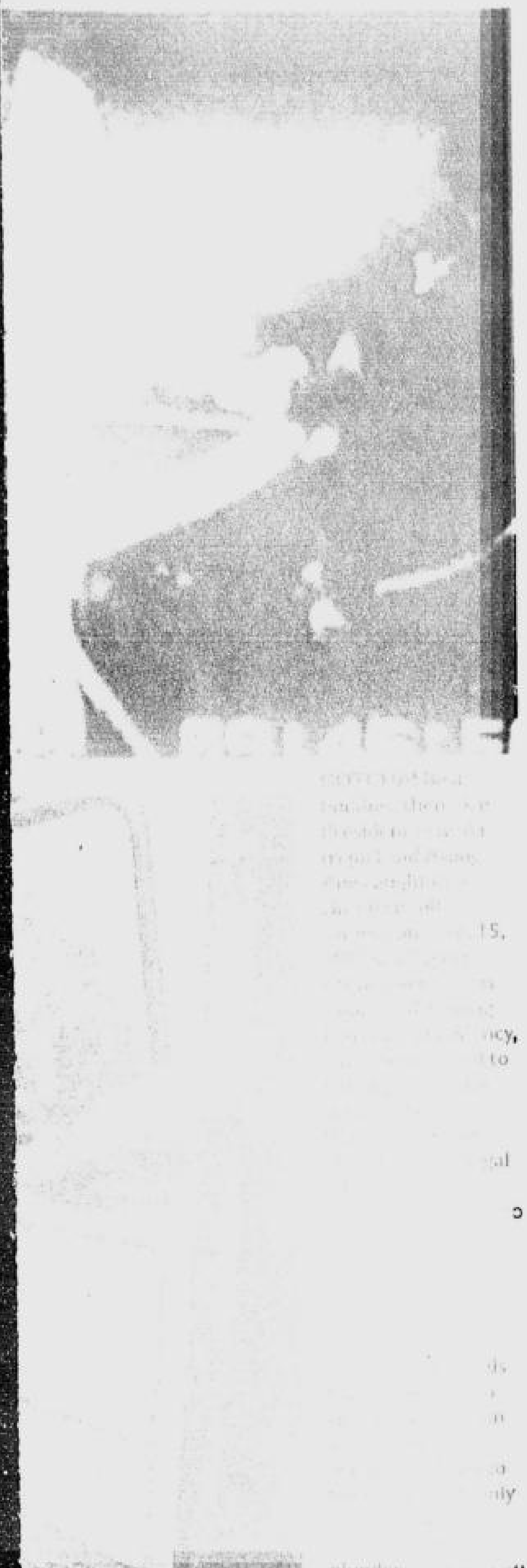

TIMELINE

The rise and fall of Atong Ang

1999—Charlie "Atong" Ang becomes the chief executive officer of Fontana Resort and Country Club in Clark, Pampanga. Ilocos Gov. Chavit Singson says former President Joseph Estrada is a co-owner of the resort.

A self-confessed gambler, Ang gained notoriety in 1998 when a videotape that was shot in 1996 showed him playing cards with his close friend, then Vice President Estrada, at the Heritage Hotel on Roxas Boulevard.

Ang becomes a consultant of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. on jai alai operations and Bingo 2-Ball, a legalized numbers game similar to "jueteng." Singson opposes Bingo 2-Ball.

Oct. 4, 2000—Singson reveals to the media that Ang is siphoning off jueteng money from Ilocos Sur, Abra and other provinces in Northern Luzon to a private account. Singson accuses Estrada's family and friends, and Malacañang officials of receiving millions monthly from jueteng operators.

Days later, he accuses the President of receiving P130 million, part of Ilocos Sur's share of the tobacco tax.

Singson's accusations lead to Estrada's impeachment trial and subsequent ouster after the walkout of the private prosecutors.

Jan. 20, 2001—On the day Estrada leaves Malacañang and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo takes her oath as president, Ang flies to the United States.

April 4, 2001—Ombudsman Aniano Desierto, upon the recommendation of the Ombudsman's Special Preliminary Investigation Panel, files plunder charges against Estrada before the Sandiganbayan.

Ang is a co-accused in the plunder case in which Estrada is accused of embezzling P130 million in tobacco excise taxes in 1998. The amount was allegedly divided among Estrada (P70 million), his wife Luisa "Loi" Ejercito (P20 million), his son Jinggoy (P15 million) and Ang (P25 million).

Nov. 26, 2001—Ang is arrested at a Las Vegas Strip hotel-casino on a Philippine government warrant charging him with plunder. He is imprisoned in a North Las Vegas jail.

December 2002—After spending a year in jail, Ang is freed on $300,000 bail and is placed under house arrest.

December 2003—Following a promise of Philippine authorities in July to waive the death penalty once Ang is extradited, tried and found guilty, US Magistrate Judge Lawrence Leavitt paves the way for the extradition of Ang.

September 2006—A US district court in Nevada orders Ang's extradition to stand trial for plunder.

Nov. 10, 2006—Ang arrives in the country.

Nov. 15, 2006—In Ang's arraignment, the Sandiganbayan denies his request to be placed in the custody of the National Bureau of Investigation in Manila where he had stayed since his extradition. He is committed to the Quezon City Jail, where he is to remain while the Sandiganbayan tries him for plunder.

Nov. 16, 2006—Citing threats to Ang's life, the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) transferred Ang from the Quezon City Jail to the Special Intensive Care Area of the Metro Manila District Jail in Bicutan, Taguig, without a court order.

Nov. 27, 2006—Under fire for transferring Ang to Bicutan without a court order, the Metro Manila BJMP director, Senior Supt. Serafin Barreto, and Quezon jail warden Ignacio Panti submit intelligence reports to the Sandiganbayan that said a jail guard had been contracted to facilitate the assassination of Ang in the city jail. The two jail officers face contempt charges.

Dec. 1, 2006—Interior Assistant Secretary Brian Raymund Yamsuan announces that the BMJP officer in charge, Chief Supt. Antonio Cruz, has been sacked because he failed the Civil Service Commission's career executive examinations. Yamsuan says it has nothing to do with the controversy surrounding the transfer of Ang. *Lawrence de Guzman, Inquirer Research*

Chavit: That would seal Erap's fate

By Michael Lim Ubac and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THAT WAS THEN: Estrada and Gov. Chavit Singson in 2000 when their friendship flourished over mahjongg tables. Behind was Rep. Salacnib Baterina.

INQUIRER PHOTO

ILOCOS SUR GOV. Luis "Chavit" Singson said Charlie "Atong" Ang's plea bargain would seal the fate of detained former President Joseph Estrada.

"That's good. I think his conscience has bothered him," Singson said yesterday after the oath-taking ceremony of new Lakas members in the House of Representatives.

Singson said Ang's admission would allow the nation "to see the whole truth" surrounding allegations that Estrada, in cahoots with Ang, enriched themselves through illegal gambling during his presidency.

In a phone interview, Singson said he felt "vindicated" by Ang's admission that he received part of the P130 million in tobacco excise tax that was diverted from Ilocos Sur allegedly to the pockets of Estrada.

"I hope that other persons would also be driven by their guilt to finally admit to their wrongdoing," said Singson. "At least the public will know who is telling the truth in this case."

In the House, the governor said Ang was acting on his own to save his skin.

"I think, he's on his own now," said Singson, belying insinuations that Malacañang had prodded Ang to turn against his former gambling buddy.

Singson, however, was cool to the idea of turning Ang into a state witness.

He said he and the Arroyo administration could have used Ang to bolster the plunder and perjury cases against Estrada a long time ago.

Singson maintained that Ang's belated admission had no more legal bearing on the pending cases, which had been already submitted for resolution by the Sandiganbayan.

"It's too late. The case against Estrada is strong," he said, but pointed out that "at least the (Sandiganbayan) justices will know what really happened."

Singson maintained that no other evidence could disturb the explosive testimony elicited by prosecutors from Estrada that he signed as Jose Velarde when he opened an account with PCIBank in 2000.

Estrada, he said, in effect incriminated himself.

IN THE KNOW

What is plea bargaining?

TO FACILITATE A SPEEDY TRIAL and reduce caseload, judges, prosecutors and defense counsels sometimes resort to plea bargaining.

This is the process in which benefits, like lighter charges and sentences, are offered in exchange for a defendant's guilty plea. The negotiation takes place between the prosecutor and the defense counsel, who bargain over charges and sentences.

Once the defendant agrees to the decision reached by the prosecutor and defense counsel, they will recommend the plea bargain to the judge on the day of arraignment. The judge can either follow or set aside the recommendation.

184 EMs released

A plea bargain ended in May 2005 the 17-month court-martial of 184 enlisted men—whose ranks ranged from master sergeant to private—who participated in the 2003 Oakwood coup attempt.

The soldiers pleaded guilty to violation of Article of War 63 (disrespect toward the President, Vice President, Congress or defense secretary), Article 64 (disrespect toward superior officer) and Article 97 (conduct prejudicial to good order and military discipline). The main charge of mutiny was dropped.

The military tribunal sentenced the soldiers to demotion by three ranks, forfeiture of two-thirds of their basic salaries for three to six months, and a yearlong confinement with hard labor. The maximum penalty for mutiny is death.

But after defense lawyers pointed out the soldiers had been detained for more than a year, the tribunal recommended their immediate release.
Inquirer Research

The money trail

IN OCTOBER 2000, ILOCOS Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson accused then President Joseph Estrada of receiving P130 million of the P170 million from Ilocos Sur's share of proceeds of Republic Act No. 7171.

RA 7171, which Singson authored in 1992, mandates that a 15-percent share of excise taxes on the manufacture of Virginia-type cigarettes be returned to the four Virginia tobacco-producing provinces: Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, La Union and Abra.

When the Department of Budget and Management released the check as cash advance, Singson said he issued to Estrada a check for P130 million.

Singson alleged that Charlie "Atong" Ang, along with three associates, went to the Land Bank of the Philippines branch on Shaw Boulevard in Mandaluyong City to encash the check.

Singson said he had a Landbank certification to prove this allegation.

Singson said he and Ang went to Estrada's private residence on Polk Street in Greenhills, San Juan, to deliver the money, which Ang placed in plastic shopping bags.

When Singson asked Estrada how much money Ang actually gave him, Singson quoted the President as telling him, "Only P70 million."

When told that he gave the P130 million he wanted, the President got mad, according to Singson, and scolded Ang in front of him.

Ang then admitted to giving P20 million to First Lady "Loi" Ejercito Estrada, and P15 million to the President's son, San Juan Mayor Jinggoy Estrada.

"Of the P130 million, only P105 million actually went to Erap and his family because Ang kept the rest of the amount," Singson said.

In his only second testimony at his trial before the Sandiganbayan in March 2006, Estrada denied Singson's allegations and called him a liar.
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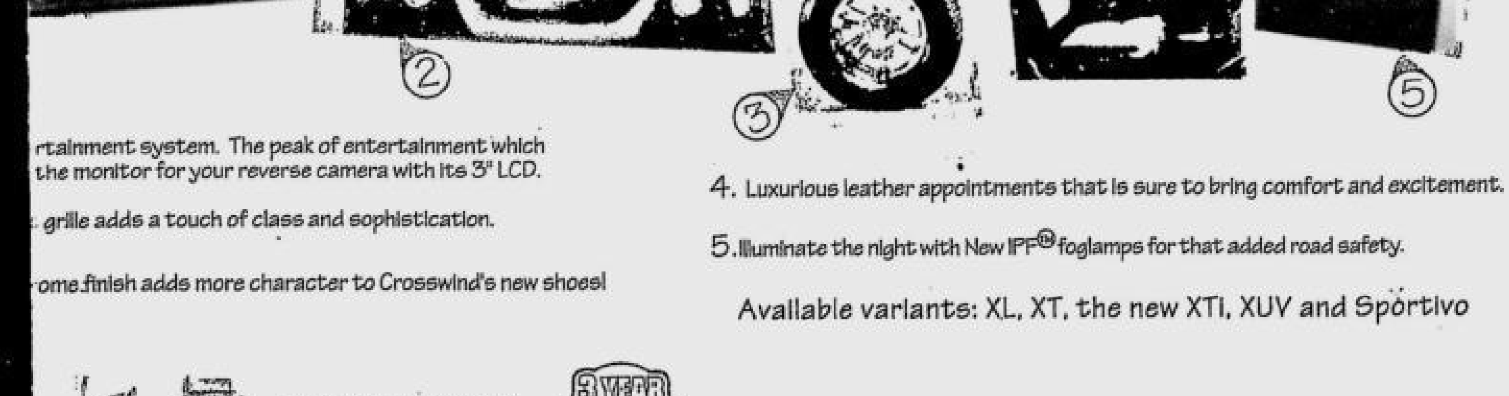

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OPINION

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Subversion

EDITORIAL

TWO OF THE MOST SHOPWORN PHRASES CONCERNING government are "timing is everything" and "all politics is local." They are overused because they happen to be true. A president may be a chief executive, but always and forever he is a political chief, too, but this doesn't mean he ought to behave like a chieftain.

And that is what President Macapagal-Arroyo is doing: behaving like a medieval duke raiding the castles of enemy barons. She is doing it with such zest that it has made her allies uneasy.

The barons, local kingpins like Governors Luis "Chavit" Singson of Ilocos Sur and Ben Evardone of Eastern Samar, questioned the duchess, that is, the President after Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno (who happens to head her home-grown political party, Kampi, now avidly cannibalizing the ranks of Lakas-CMD) in league with Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, who is preparing for a congressional grudge match with Franklin Drilon, had the Iloilo Provincial Capitol raided by the police to evict Drilon's political ally, Gov. Niel Tupas.

The barons have asked the President to order a temporary moratorium on the suspension and dismissal of local government executives. The President's factotum-in-chief, Eduardo Ermita, loftily replied that the Office of the Ombudsman is a constitutional office. But that didn't stop Gonzalez from sniping at the head of another constitutional office. When Chair Purificacion Quisumbing of the Human Rights Commission expressed shock over the Iloilo capitol caper, Gonzalez grumbled: Was she there? But neither did he witness what he claims Tupas was prepared to do: airlift supporters from the Philippine Military Academy to foment trouble for the administration.

There are two kinds of politics in our country: the local, based on fiefdoms, which hasn't moved much beyond the jealousies and rivalries of the era of the rajahs and datus during the Spanish conquest; and the national, which, if still heavily personality-oriented, does revolve around issues somehow. Our national politics attempts, fitfully at times, to uphold a regime of laws, not of men; our local politics has always operated on the assumption that a local bigwig is the law. And for local politics, issues count for nothing. When the barons speak, the law falls silent.

So when the modern collides with the premodern, what happens?

Ironically enough, the law throws the matter into the people's court: elections. There is a principle in our laws that when an official facing charges succeeds in securing reelection, the charges against him are deemed dismissed, because the public acted as the supreme judge in the case. This is the reason administrations generally tread warily when it comes to any act that might foster the impression that it is unfairly prosecuting its enemies. It could boomerang and help the enemy. This subverts whatever merits the charges might have in the first place.

We are all for enforcing the law, but law enforcers must be sensitive not only to the feelings of politicians, but also to the sensibilities of the public. To the Filipino public, it is never enough to enforce the letter of the law; the spirit of the law, as it is commonly understood (and even misunderstood) must equally prevail.

So when it was claimed by Palace apologists that among the dangers lurking in the capitol was a machine gun mounted on a canopy, a public long skeptical of after-the-fact arguments was unimpressed. After all, it begs the commonsensical question: What commander sends policemen, even if they are clad in body armor, to storm a machine-gun nest? Or did the Cabinet watch one Clint Eastwood film too many?

Five days after the attack, an Armalite was, indeed, produced by police officials. The problem is that it is licensed to the capitol and the weapon was in no one's physical possession when it was found. Not to mention the question of why it took so long to bring up the capture of the weapon. When asked why this was so, the police said they were busy with the operations and with the security preparations for the Dinagyang Festival.

Ferdinand Marcos would not have done what this administration has done. Not even in the revolutionary circumstances after 1986 was this done. The law is a blunt instrument. Wielded clumsily, the collateral damage isn't worth it.

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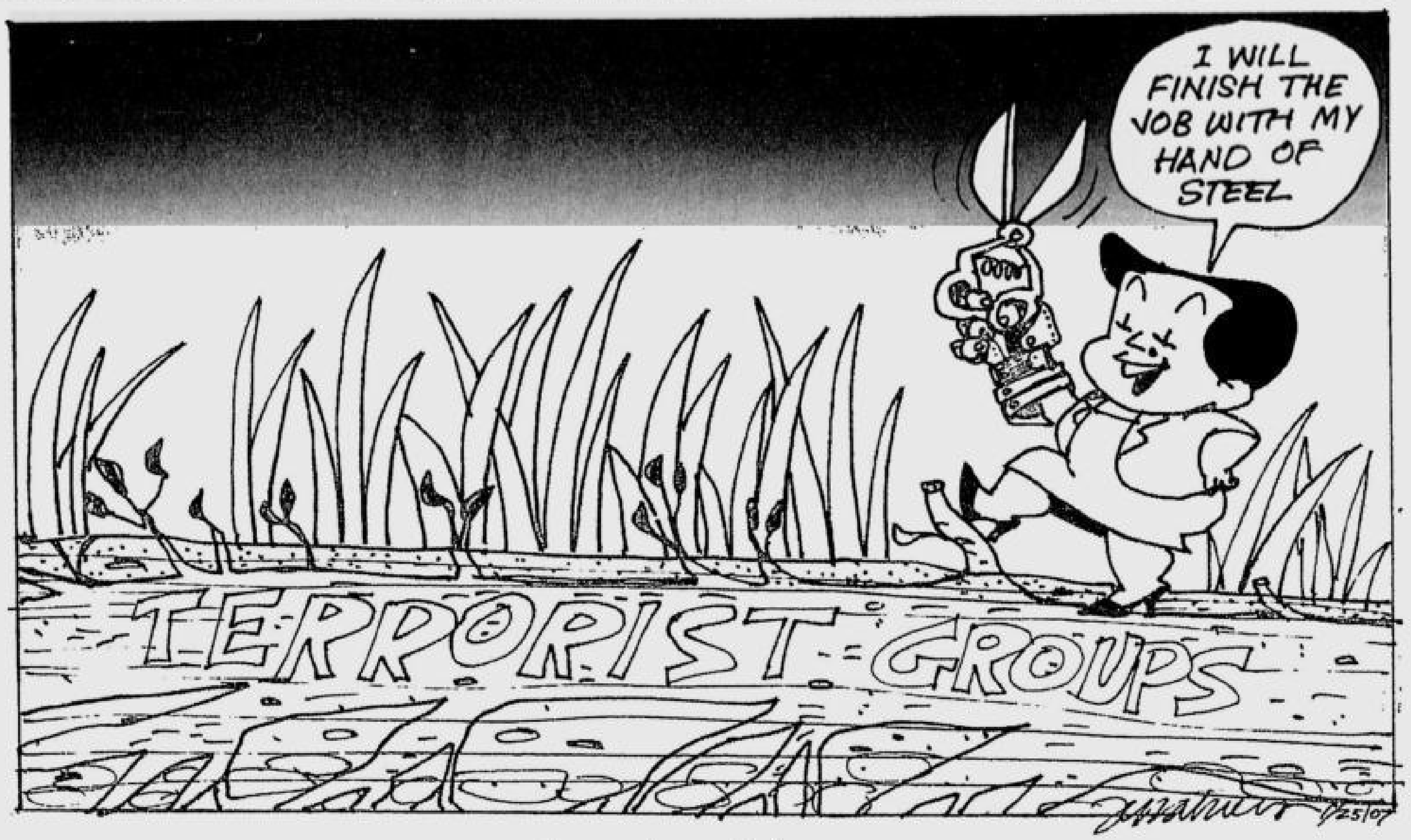

I WILL FINISH THE JOB WITH MY HAND OF STEEL
TERRORIST GROUPS

A mixed bag

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

SOME 5,693 FILIPINOS LIVED IN THE UNITED States in the early 1920s, when the first mainly Ilocano workers landed in Hawaii as sugar field *sacadas*. But in 2006, over 1.03 million Filipinos headed for 193 countries, seeking jobs they couldn't get here: from teachers in Los Angeles, doctors in Capetown, dishwashers in Hong Kong, to caregivers in Tel Aviv.

The country crossed, last year, the "psychological benchmark" of fielding a million OFWs per year. Today, one out of every 10 Filipinos works abroad. So, what have we to show for it?

A mixed bag, replies the Scalabrini Migration Center. "Migrants and their families benefited from labor migration, mostly because of remittances," writes Maruja A. B. Asis. "But the economic impacts beyond the family level are less tangible"—although residential plot sales to OFWs are on the upswing.

The Bangko Sentral estimates that the 2006 formal remittances may have crested at P12.3 billion. Much of that trickled down in small packets to OFW families. But the totals, when funds sent by unofficial channels are tacked on, could range between $14 billion and $21 billion, the Asian Development Bank estimates.

Macro figures mean little to most OFWs. "Individuals make decisions based on perceptions of what would be beneficial for them," notes the Scalabrini study. "Even doctors study to be nurses to have better chances of working abroad …. Perceptions of the international labor market have woven their way into the educational and work aspirations of Filipinos."

Anila F. Esmeralda is one of 80 Filipinos recruited to teach in Los Angeles, California. She wrote: "To be away from family, friends and countries was a painful decision. But after two decades of teaching in our country, I became frustrated. Our government is too poor to provide for public schools. So when the opportunity to teach in the US knocked, I welcomed it.

"'I'm doing our country a favor,' I kidded our principal (when I took my leave). Whoever takes my place means one less among unemployed graduates. The dollars I send home will help the economy."

Well, dollar remittances last year were at an all-time high. Right?

"You can't help but compare schools in the two countries. God richly blessed America! Here, students and teachers alike are supplied with what they need. And when one recalls the sad state of our schoolchildren, you weep.

"Working here gave me the chance to learn other cultures. And I earn more than what I received even as a Master Teacher. Now, I help my family, others—and still save, a luxury before. Soon, I'll start a scholarship program which I've been dreaming of. So, I did make a right decision, didn't I?"

"Filipino society has become migration-savvy," the Scalabrini study adds. "Even without government involvement, labor migration … will persist thanks to social networks, social capital and social remittances."

But there are costs. And concerns persist about the destabilizing impacts of migration: on families, children's education and other societal values.

Married to a Filipino executive in a multinational firm, Annie Montemayor shuttles between homes in Washington and Manila. Here, she gives an insight into an OFW who's heading for home:

"My occasional cleaning lady, Pruny, has decided to go home. She cleans toilets, baby-sits, scrubs floors, serving several masters every day of the week, with no rest. Her grownup children want her back to stop their father from squandering the hard-earned dollars (she sends) on wine, women and song.

"She is heartbroken. Her man did not stand by her while she was away and earning bread, which he should have been doing. But: if he behaves when she goes back to the house she provided for her family, she will forgive him. But her fight and emotions are gone. Deep disappointment has come to pass with all the broken promises of her man.

"When she returns, and loneliness sets in, when the money runs out, as it eventually will, with no pension forthcoming, then what? Will her sacrifice be worth it? Maybe. But for people, without grounding in values, not all these dollars are put to good use. The underground economy makes a killing. But who really benefits from that?

"Or will (she) be disgusted like the rest and feel there is no hope for this country unless meaningful reforms are done to keep the citizenry at home? Alas, that seems so far away, like a dim distant future."

Now a staff member of a major auditing firm in New York, Jasmin M. Peña thinks that bad government causes deepening frustrations that shove people out. She writes: "I used to believe, especially after graduation, that the Philippines would rise from its deep slumber ….(But) with corrupt officials engrossed in pocketing for themselves what little there is, middle-class professionals like me, had no choice.

"After 10 years of working and dutifully paying taxes (no choice, since the taxes were automatically deducted from my salary), I realized things were not going to get better. So, I decided to work abroad—and eventually stay here for good, including my loved ones.

"Migration is not forever. (Neither) are (the) much-needed remittances. I don't want to think what will happen to the Philippines if (the flow of remittances) stops.

"Others will say we took an easy—even selfish—way out. Probably (we did). I don't know. But I'll keep working for a better life wherever it may be. And thank you for touching a sentimental chord about the Philippines. I used to think I had none left in me."

(E-mail: juanlmercado@gmail.com)

Opposition

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THAT WAS A VERY NICE PICTURE THAT appeared on our front page last Saturday, during the sixth anniversary of Edsa II. It featured Patsy Abad today and (in the inset) yesterday, or specifically six years ago. Patsy is the daughter of Butch and Dina Abad. The inset shows her as a kid during the inauguration of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo: She is standing on the stage beside GMA, holding a Bible. Everybody else, including GMA, has their hands on their hearts, vowing eternal fealty to God, country and People Power.

The picture in the foreground shows Abad as she is now. She is 17 and has grown much, much bigger, and certainly much, much taller, than GMA who dwarfed her in the earlier picture. But she has grown in more ways than one. She is no longer at the Edsa Shrine, she is at UP Diliman, marching in front of its Hall of Shame. And she is no longer holding the Bible, she is holding a placard that says "*Itakwil ang mga taksil sa diwa ng Edsa 2!*" (Down with the betrayers of the spirit of Edsa II!) A reference to the person beside her six years ago, the person who went on to trash People Power. Holding the Bible and holding that placard have one thing in common: It's holding on to the truth.

The significance of that picture to me—quite apart from the fact that there's hope for this country yet, particularly to come from the young—is that it encapsulates the essence of a word that has been bandied about in this country, without people stopping to wonder what it means. That word is "opposition." What does opposition, or more formidably, Opposition with a capital "O," really mean?

Well, it means many things to many people. But there is really only one true or real opposition, or Opposition, in this country, one that is sanctioned by history. That—as Patsy Abad articulates with the dazzling simplicity of the uncluttered mind—is opposing the beneficiary of Edsa II for betraying Edsa II.

I say this in light of the growing debate about an emerging "Third Force," which Erap's people who have set themselves up as the "Opposition," namely the characters in UNO, seem unhappy about. I myself am unhappy about it only in that it calls itself "the Third Force." You talk of "Third Force" and you conjure images of Rogelio de la Rosa and Raul Manglapus and all the other candidates that rose to challenge the Liberal and Nacionalista candidates before martial law, and who—unlike Bernardo Carpio who managed to push back the two mountains that were trying to crush him—were cut to pieces ere they began. You talk of Third Force, and you talk of token, or *saling pusa*, or, as that Bicol word puts it so well with all its connotations of nuisance, "*sawong-sawong*."

You talk of "Third Force" and you grant that there is already an Opposition in this country represented by the people associated with Erap. I know Erap has the financial resources, but he does not have the moral one. Indeed, the vastness of the first is matched only by the paucity of the second. That is not an opposition, that is a restoration. That is not a step forward, that is a step backward.

In fact, they are the one and only reason an Edsa III or People Power III has not taken off in this country, notwithstanding that everyone knows that GMA conspired with that snake, Garci, to steal the apple from Eden; or completely secularly and viciously, to kidnap a public school teacher-cum-poll watcher who wanted to testify on the cheating. People Power requires as its most essential element the contention of Good and Evil, the undiluted venom of the Evil matched only by the pure magnificence of the Good. The Evil sparking outrage in the mind, and the Good, or the glimpse of it, driving people out into the streets.

You have Evil, however unparalleled, without Good, however dimly espied, and you produce only cynicism. You have a people burning in anger but unable, or unwilling, to do a thing about it. Which is what we have now. Which is why despite survey after survey showing that GMA is the most detested person in this country, we have spectacle after spectacle of attempts to rouse the citizens falling on deaf ears. There is no Good flailing unceasingly at people, enough to tear them away from the siren's call of the NBA and storm the gates of Hell, or Malacañang.

What we need today is not a Third Force, what we need is a real Opposition. What we need is a force that rejects, refutes, or indeed, opposes, all that GMA stands for. What we need is a project that moves the country forward and not merely grinds it to a halt.

That, too, is why I am unhappy about the "Third Force" that is currently being forged by the LP, NP, Aksyon Demokratiko and other small political groups. I have no problem with its smallness: Great oaks come from small seeds. What I have a problem with is its identity. It is more defined by what it is not than by what it is. The "Third Force is not for GMA or for Erap, it is not for the Administration or the Opposition. That is a location, that is not an affirmation. That is a geography, that is not an identity.

You want an identity, take it from Patsy Abad, take it from the desperate souls sending out their lamentations to the heavens from the pit of this land: Enough of the betrayers of the dreams of Edsa II. Let their heads roll. It is opposing GMA not because she thwarted Erap but because she thwarted Edsa. Not because she cut short Erap's term but because she cut People Power in the fullness of its flower. Not because she substituted herself for Erap but because she substituted personal ambition for national aspiration, scraggly greed for epic heroism, boundless spite for boundless gratitude.

That is real Opposition. All the rest is just masturbation.

Tatad blasts 'family park'

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

THE FIRST MAJOR FISSURE IN THE UNITED Opposition recently surfaced when former Sen. Francisco Tatad resigned. He cited a number of reasons, among them the lack of criteria in the selection of opposition senatorial candidates and the dynasty issue that has bedeviled the opposition lately. Tatad lamented the fact that siblings and children of incumbent senators are being drafted into the opposition's senatorial lineup, which he termed "a mad and shallow family park." He said he was appalled by the lack of responsibility shown by senators in fielding their relatives, and called on them to resign if such candidacy is inevitable.

Many of us agree wholeheartedly with Tatad and we are glad that he seems to have recovered his senses. The senators ought to stop their siblings or children from running for seats in their chamber, as this would further damage this once-revered and venerable institution.

* * *

I welcome last Tuesday's INQUIRER editorial that decried what pundits have termed the emerging "family club" in the Senate even as it asserted that the "ideal solution" is the enactment of a law that would ban political dynasties. But the INQUIRER acknowledged that as of now, such a ban "remains a pipe dream" and conceded that this issue is "best addressed by a constitutional convention in the future." So true, but unfortunately, a constitutional convention is even more of a pipe dream. For who among the 12 senators elected in May 2007 would sign a Senate resolution calling for the creation of a constitutional convention after spending at least P100 million to get elected? And would the president elected in 2010 support a Con-con after spending at least P2 billion to get elected? We Charter change advocates grew hoarse in saying that the most propitious time for such change is between 2004 and 2007, but people, for reasons of their own, refused to heed it. Now it's hard to resist saying we told you so.

* * *

But if we lament the prospect of having siblings in the Senate, we should also lament this spectacle in the House. Hence, this call on the President and the First Gentleman not to field their second son, Diosdado III, or "Dato," for the Camarines Sur district seat vacated by Rep. Rolando Andaya when he became budget secretary. If Dato wins, there would be two Arroyo bothers in the House (the other is Pampanga's Mikey), not to mention their uncle, Ignacio. To be sure, there have been a number of related representatives such as Agapito and Noynoy Aquino, Mark and Charlie Cojuangco, and Crispin and Gilbert Remulla. But the times call for heroic sacrifice from the First Family and they have to set an example of good sense and morality in this dynasty issue. Why not ask Dato to wait until 2010 when Mikey can perhaps run for something else or go back to the private sector?

* * *

In our interview of Ambassador Marciano Paynor, Palace chief of Protocol and secretary-general of the national organizing committee for the 12th Asean Summit, Cecile Alvarez and I noted that in order to appreciate the Cebu event, we should go back to the government's decision to postpone it last December. That decision was denounced by the usual critics and despite Paynor's explanation that the one and only reason was the threat of Typhoon Seniang hitting Cebu, various speculative reasons were advanced, such as terrorism and the bishops' rally. Paynor recalled that in the early morning of Dec. 5, Pagasa told the committee Seniang could hit Northern Cebu around Dec. 8, when the heads of state were just arriving in Mactan (of the 16 heads of government, only the prime ministers of New Zealand and Laos did not bring their own planes). He stressed that Pagasa's forecast was counterchecked with other weather-tracking agencies such as that of the US Pacific Command and they all confirmed it. By Dec. 7, Seniang was given a 60 percent chance of passing Northern Cebu at 120 kph, which later rose to 70 percent and 150 kph. Moreover, its radius had widened from 200 to 400 km, which meant it could hit Metro Cebu with lateral gusty winds that could affect the leaders' planes. Paynor said that if the storm were to hit, it would require moving out in a rush about 30,000 people who had converged in Cebu, among them the heads of government and 2,500 members of their staff and foreign media. Only a week before, "Reming" struck Bicol, tying down government's resources there. Aklan and Boracay were also devastated.

* * *

All these influenced the decision to postpone the Summit, which was relayed by the Department of Foreign Affairs to various governments by Dec. 7, one day before the leaders were scheduled to arrive. Paynor said they all understood why. His task of coordination was made easier by the fact that in April he had invited the chiefs of protocol of most of the participating countries to Manila to plan the Summit. Recommending the postponement of the Summit was "the most difficult decision I had to make," he said, and he lost 25 lb which he hasn't regained (he's back to his weight when he graduated from the Philippine Military Academy in 1971). What complicated the situation, recalled Paynor, was that Burma was originally scheduled to host the Summit, but it begged off due to internal developments, and so the job of hosting it fell on us. By Dec. 8, the organizing committee had already finished 48 meetings and when the Summit was finally held this month in Cebu, they had 44 more meetings.

With the postponement, the Summit had to be rescheduled fast, to give the next host country, Singapore, time to prepare for the next Summit scheduled later this year. This meant a new round of negotiations to find a suitable date for all the leaders. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had agreed to continue his state visit to Manila in December despite the postponement, and he was visiting four European capitals over four days in January. Still he agreed to fly to Cebu on the fifth day.

(To be continued)

Abbé Pierre

HUMAN FACE

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

FRANCE IS MOURNING THE PASSING OF ONE of its most loved, if not sometimes controversial, figures. *L'Abbé Pierre est mort*. Abbé Pierre, a Catholic priest who devoted much of his life to the care of the homeless poor, died on Monday, Jan. 22. He was 94.

France is probably neck and neck with Italy in the saints department. Despite France's secularized society, it has continued to produce saintly icons to this day. The much-loved Brother Roger of Taize, also in his 90s, died last year in the hands of a knife-wielding deranged devotee. These modern-day saintly Frenchmen died really old while some of France's popular saintly women died very young, like Therese of Lisieux and Joan of Arc.

French President Jacques Chirac himself announced Abbé Pierre's death and called him "an immense figure, a conscience, a man who personified goodness." What a tribute. Abbé Pierre, Chirac said, "represented the spirit of rebellion against misery, suffering, injustice, and the strength of solidarity." Abbé Pierre raged against the dying of the light in the hearts of men and women.

In popular polls over the years, Abbé Pierre topped the list more than 17 times as France's favorite personality. At one time, he even edged out football superstar Zinedine Zidane. Would such "an immense figure" make it to the bottom of a list in perpetually star-struck Philippines? France, producer of great classic films and movie and fashion icons, just had to give way to a non-star. Sure, Abbé Pierre was an icon in his own right, a star in a way, but in a different firmament.

Born in 1912, Abbé Pierre was christened Henri-Antoine Groues. As a young man, he gave up his inherited wealth and joined the Franciscan Order (the Capuchins). Because of lung problems, he left the order, but he was ordained a priest in 1938 when the dark clouds of war were threatening Europe.

"Abbé Pierre" was a pseudonym, a nom de guerre that he used in the French resistance in World War II. The priest saved thousands of lives, mainly Jews as well as the politically persecuted, and helped them escape to Switzerland or Algeria.

After the war, Abbé Pierre, upon the persuasion of Charles de Gaulle, became a member of Parliament. He was elected to the Constituent Assembly as an independent candidate. He used his position to help the cause of the dispossessed of his constituency and of the whole country.

In 1949, Abbé Pierre founded the Emmaus movement. His encounter with a despairing man who wanted to end his own life started it all. Other men in various states of despair and seeking shelter continued to come to him.

The first Emmaus communities were in Paris. Emmaus aimed to help the homeless, including refugees, many of whom were rag pickers. Abbé Pierre provided not only homes but financial assistance as well, so that the poor could begin to use their skills to make a living. The rag pickers earned income by recycling people's garbage. They soon earned the name Les Chiffoneirs d'Emmaus or the rag pickers of Emmaus.

In 1951, Abbé Pierre resigned from Parliament in order to fully concentrate on helping the poor, the refugees especially, who were flocking to Paris. The priest saw the power of the media, particularly TV, to campaign on behalf of the poor and raise public consciousness. Not long after, a film on his life was produced, thus spreading the cause he espoused.

I don't know if that film is the same as the film "Hiver '54: L'abbé Pierre" (Winter of '54: Abbe Pierre).

Emmaus is now an international organization with 327 member-groups that convene every four years. An executive committee runs the operations. Emmaus maintains homes in different parts of the world. The movement got its name from Emmaus, a place in Palestine where the resurrected Jesus appeared to his apostles, broke bread with them and, uh, caused burning in their hearts.

In spite of his popularity, Abbé Pierre had his share of controversy. He maintained friendship with philosopher and convicted "Holocaust denier" Roger Garaudy, as well as with the ultra-progressive French Bishop Jacques Gaillot.

In his own memoirs, Abbé Pierre admitted to having casual sex with women when he was a young priest, something that he regretted because, he said "it made me feel untrue."

OK, the curious would surely want to know more. So here are some entries from his memoirs, his thoughts on what the experience taught him.

"I understand that sexual desire, in order to be completely fulfilled, has to be expressed in a living relationship, tender and trustful. I had chosen a life that could not allow such a relationship. I could have only made a woman unhappy and I would find myself being divided between two irreconcilable choices of life.

"Truth can only exist in simplicity, not duplicity. We (priests) have to reject any hypocrisy so omnipresent (in our Church). Sex is a powerful vital force; it is possible for anyone to yield to sexual temptation. But it is completely different for a priest or religious to be sexually active. He can cause his victim decades of suffering.

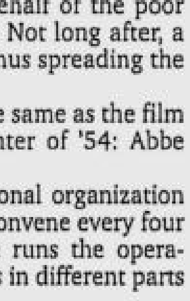
"As for me, if I had married or become involved in a love relationship, I could never have accomplished what I have. My vocation required unlimited flexibility. But I am convinced that in the Church there is need for both married priests and those who practice celibacy who can dedicate themselves totally to prayer and the service of others."

Having revealed so much in his memoirs, Abbé Pierre may not make it to the pantheon of the canonized, but so what? In 2005 he made it to third in a TV poll for "The Greatest Frenchman." Of all time, I suppose. He had given hope.

* * *

Send comments to cerespd@info.com.ph

The amazing race



THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

THE SCUTTLEBUTT IS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION has wooed Tessie Aquino-Oreta and Tito Sotto to their side, to co-star in the Palace's senatorial lineup. If true, the news isn't surprising after the two mounted a big production about leaving Edgardo Angara's LDP and moving to Eduardo Cojuangco's NPC. The broad smile of Richard Gomez a week or so ago, after he met with a Palace political operative, might be another broad hint of what is to come.

Since bloc voting was abolished in the 1950s and the restriction of election inspectors to the two-party system was made obsolete by the multi-party system, there has been no incentive for the voter to vote "straight," that is, entire slates. The electorate mixes and matches, and a senatorial candidate's individual reputation or record trumps party affiliation every time.

What does matter is the standing of the administration in the public's opinion at any given time. An unpopular administration will harm senatorial candidates affiliated with it; a popular one will boost the chances of even the middling candidates. And a thoroughly unpopular one may be able to "cheat-in" some, but not all, of its candidates, but not enough to totally skew the electorate's verdict.

I think, then, it would be a mistake to attribute all opposition, or reservations, to the idea of a slate coming from outside the leadership of UNO, to "pro" Estrada or "pro" Arroyo people. First of all, a third force will be hard put to run a full slate, anyway. Secondly, there will be a certain overlap based on a simple reality: any UNO slate will have more in common with a non-UNO, but, at the very least, ambivalent—if not outright hostile—to the administration slate. Notice that both the UNO and non-UNO senatorial slates, presented in preliminary terms, usually include Kiko Pangilinan, Manny Villar and Chiz Escudero.

My personal approach in vetting senatorial candidates is to ask these questions:

1. Which candidate would at least view impeachment with an open mind, or if with a closed one, then at least in favor of a more democratic attitude, which is, to impeach?

2. Which candidate would have an interest in defending the rights of the Senate (and the constituency it represents, the nation), in the face of hostility, and a lack of cooperation, from the executive?

3. Which candidate would be in a good position to derail any future mischief concerning the Constitution, specifically in terms of efforts to undermine it by either ignoring the Senate or foisting a grand deception like the so-called "people's initiative"?

Obviously, on all three counts, any administration slate would be disqualified, too bad for the administration candidates. For example, just the other day, I had the chance to ask Miguel Zubiri all three questions and he didn't hedge on his answers: He would approach impeachment with an open mind; personally favor a regionally elected Senate; and support amendments to that end, but he would oppose any amendment effort that would ignore the Senate. (He also told me that, together with Gilbert Teodoro and Ben-Hur Abalos, he, in fact, convinced the Speaker to backtrack on his unilateral effort to force through Charter change.) He also said the public has vocally insisted on electing a president, which means the parliamentary system won't fly, and he is opposed to any sort of a "bastardized" hybrid political system: what is necessary is to strengthen political institutions, not weaken or confuse them. I am sure he's sincere, and he will match his beliefs with actions if elected.

But any administration slate will be under tremendous pressure to acquit the President at all costs, if there will be an impeachment. This is when belonging to a Senate bloc could weaken a senator's resolve to act independently. An administration bloc, too, would roll over, die, or wag its tail in the face of executive efforts to ignore the Senate or bend it to its will; and it would participate gladly in efforts to amend the Constitution to build a one-party, unicameral parliament.

All roads lead to Valentine's Day—when UNO has to firm up its slate, other groups opposed to the administration (and skeptical over or at least uneasy with UNO) have to announce theirs, and the Palace has to plant the smooch of death on its anointed ones. So far, UNO has a firm slate of six: Ping Lacson, Villar, Escudero, Alan Peter Cayetano, Pangilinan and Loren Legarda. The reformist block so far consists of Ralph Recto, Ed Angara, Noynoy Aquino and Sonia Roco, as well as the three common to both slates. That makes 10. That leaves room, at the very least, for other candidates—and, I must say, the names being floated are promising.

And let me say this, too: UNO deserves credit for resisting the temptation to trot out the living but politically dead, like Kit Tatad or Ernesto Maceda. If circumstances have forced Gomez, Oreta and Sotto into the arms of the administration, it speaks well of those they've decided to leave behind. An Angara-Lacson reconciliation, or at least mutual toleration, boggles the mind less than the sight of Zubiri and Mike Defensor stumping together with Oreta and Sotto.

All I know is this: speaking for Lakas-CMD, the Speaker has said it will be more of the usual when it comes to Charter change (on their terms, in pursuit of their own agenda) after the elections. The President, as head of Kampi, and its chief operator, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, have shown in Iloilo that they will do anything to eliminate anyone who opposes them. Inadvertently over state radio, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita revealed they will pull out all stops to keep control of the House, which is all they really care about. Which is why they'll embrace anyone, while everyone else is making an effort to be more discerning.

Breakfast clubs

YOUNG BLOOD

Yvette Tan

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

WHEN WE WERE GROWING UP IN SAN JUAN, IT WAS MY parents' practice to hurry us children through breakfast (me most especially, since I eat so slowly that a sloth could go through a hotel buffet before I even finish the appetizers), hustle us, still bleary-eyed, into our car, and drive us to school before our brains became clear enough to remember that we didn't like going to school. After that, they would drive over to McDonald's Greenhills, the nearest one at the time, to meet their friends for breakfast.

Upon entering the restaurant, my parents, who were usually joined at the hip, would separate. My mom would join her *amigas* while my dad headed straight for his *kumpares*. Conversations ranged from whose daughter was dating whose son to the latest fashion and on to whether the stock market was going up or down. For my parents and everyone in their circle of friends, it was a great way to start the workday.

The people who gathered in the restaurant were parents who had just seen their children off to school, elderly couples who lived in the San Juan area, or health buffs capping their morning walks or tai chi with a cup of coffee and some friendly conversation. The regulars enjoyed special treatment (as special as you can get in a fast-food restaurant, at least) by the morning staff. They were allowed to bring food inside the restaurant (having a McBreakfast every day will get to you eventually) even if it was a huge box of non-Mc pastries and all they ordered was coffee. Some people left mugs, which they preferred to use instead of styrofoam cups. And the regulars got free coffee refills long before it became *de rigueur*.

But as special as the treatment they were getting from the restaurant crew was, it was nothing compared to the feeling of belonging. When regulars came in for breakfast during weekdays, they were greeted by what sounded like the whole restaurant—not all at once, of course, which would have been creepy. And the whole place was always noisier than a classroom filled with misbehaving students.

Everyone knew everybody else, if only by face. It was almost like a secret club, minus the code names and unique handshakes. I remember asking my mother on more than one occasion who the lady she was saying hello was, only to be told, "I have no idea. We just see each other at McDonald's."

In the few times that I accompanied my parents to their breakfast club, I noticed one thing: Everybody seemed happy. It was as if problems were checked in at the door with the umbrellas and frowning would cost them their coffee refills.

Some people might think of this whole exercise as shallow and superficial, but I like to think of it as a release, if only for a little while, from the worries and cares of the world. No matter what was going on in their lives, the regulars knew that there was a place they could go to where they didn't have to talk about it, and if anyone did induge in self-pity, peer pressure would stop him.

This community of McBreakfasters has always fascinated me, especially since I have never seen another quite like it. Sure, other communities have sprung up over a cup of coffee and a two-piece pancake meal, but none is as warm, vibrant and alive as the one my parents belonged to. Even now, when I enter the same McDonald's outlet on a weekday morning, everything seems subdued. Some people stopped coming once their youngest child went off to college. Others, like my father, have passed on. And though it's impossible not to see somebody one knows on any weekday morning there, the ratio of familiar to unfamiliar faces is becoming smaller and smaller.

I don't think they knew it, but my parents' McDonald's tradition taught me a few things. First, that breakfast is an important meal because it jump-starts your metabolism aside from giving you important nutrients to start your day.

But wait, I learned that from my homeroom teacher. Let's try again. What I learned from my parents' weekday breakfasts was that it is important to have a place, a ritual and a group of friends to help you either ground yourself in this tumultuous world or to help you forget your problems, if only for the duration of a meal. A little escapism is fine, as long as it rejuvenates your desire to take on anything that crosses your path. I also learned that you get treated better by people you treat like family, and that you can have almost anything (like a free refill), if you ask nicely enough.

I didn't realize it until now, but I have had the opportunity to put the first lesson to good use. I and some high school friends have been getting together for breakfast every other weekend for the past few years now. We talk about anything under the sun, help each other out with problems, share with each other our craziest dreams and weirdest business ideas. Though we may be but a small group, albeit a noisy one amid a sea of diners and we don't go to one restaurant often enough to be considered regulars (no special favors from the staff yet), we have found a tiny community, a rail to cling on to in the ship of life when the waves of the world threaten to wash us overboard. Someday, I hope to pass on like my father, hopefully to a place where every day is a breakfast shared with good friends.

Yvette Tan, 29, has just given up her job in media to join the world of commerce. She writes for various publications and is addicted to lip gloss.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

THEY SAID

Catching up

"What we lack is a unified sports program, that's why the goal of catching up with the best of the world is a long and arduous task for us."

—Philippine Sports Commission chair William "Butch" Ramirez

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One way to prove PCGG's sincerity to help farmers

PRUDENCE DICTATES THAT THE Presidential Commission on Good Government push for the resolution of the Motion for Execution filed by the Office of the Solicitor General in relation to the 27-percent CIIF-SMC shares, before it uses the shares' P1.9 billion cash dividends.

Touching that money at this time—election period—would cast great doubt on the PCGG's intended use for that money. After all, the PCGG, under lawyer Camilo Sabio's leadership, has practically stopped attending to the coco levy cases in his attempt to forge a compromise agreement with Danding Cojuangco.

The Sandiganbayan already ruled on May 7, 2004 that the CIIF-SMC shares are held in trust for the coconut farmers. In denying Cojuangco's Motion for Reconsideration, the court in its Dec. 28, 2004 decision specifically stated that "It is high time that the real beneficiaries of the coconut levy fund, **the coconut farmers who contributed to it** and the entire coconut industry, be given a chance to reap the benefits that are due them."

What is left pending on this particular case is the Motion for Execution that will enable the government to source funds from the shares, including the dividends and interests, for programs that will benefit the coconut farmers and the industry.

The issue of ownership of the coconut levy and its funded companies is a major one. It must be decided once and for all. The coconut farmers have been waiting for more than 20 years now. More than 400,000 hectares of coconut lands are in need of rehabilitation, and 3.4 million coconut farmers live in dire poverty.

But before talks of tapping the huge amounts of the coconut levies, such as all or any part of the CIIF-SMC shares, the PCGG should first put in place the mechanisms to ensure that the poor coconut farmers would indeed be the ones to benefit from them. Only this will prove beyond doubt a serious intention on the part of a government that has very little integrity to speak of.

—LIZA C. CONDINO,
program training officer,
Coconut Industry Reform (COIR)
Movement Inc., 84 Masikap Ext.,
Barangay Central, Diliman, QC

Free trade to expose our country's weaknesses

I'M A BELIEVER OF FREE TRADE, liberalization, globalization and the like because, in the world today, there is no other way to go but in these directions that prove Charles Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest, of the effective, of the efficient, of the competent, of the adept, of those with good, righteous, ethical and intelligent sense of governance.

With the adoption of free trade by the Asean economies, we will see once again the unfitness, the ineffectiveness, inefficiency, incompetence and the corruption that make Filipinos uncompetitive.

Some years ago, I remember one columnist saying that if Vietnam ever surpasses the Philippines on the road to economic progress, she will commit suicide. The least that can be said of what she was implying then is, that eventuality is just around the bend.

However, at the sight of all the Vietnamese businesses sprouting here in Canada, I think *nalampasan na tayo*. Given the continuing, unabated graft and corruption in all levels of government and society (which is predominantly Catholic), it is not farfetched for Burma, too, to overtake the Philippines.

—ROY FABROS,
755 South Selkirk St.,
Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada

Sellout was not surprising but it was infuriating

I SUPPOSE THE PHILIPPINE GOVernment's decision to turn over a convicted American soldier to the US Embassy is not entirely surprising. After all, it has time and again bent over backwards to accommodate the whims of Washington.

But for a while there, I held out hope that, maybe this time, the Philippine government would stand up to the arm-twisting tactics of the Americans and represent the will of its people. How very, very sad that the Arroyo administration can so easily sell out its own people. Well, no, it's not sad. It's maddening and infuriating. Filipinos everywhere must hold their government accountable.

Moreover, this case must call into question the validity of the Visiting Forces Agreement, which gives foreigners favored treatment over Filipinos. *Tama na!*

—RALPH PENA,
ralph.pena@mac.com

LETTERS

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Implications of that 'Moment of Glory'

THE ASEAN SUMMIT HELD IN Cebu early this year was a convenient curtain-raiser for the political debauchery that will be upon us in the next five months. Dubbed as the "Moment of Glory" for the nation (the reference to Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is unmistakable), it dealt with issues we, as a nation, have failed to resolve and will never be able to resolve by ourselves.

Take for example terrorism, which is the last resort of a society's disgruntled elements who are too weak to openly confront established authority with their grievances. Terrorism has been with the civilized world from the time rulers started imposing authority, by using military and economic might on ever-increasing numbers of subjects. Terrorism was of small concern to us until the United States recruited us into its worldwide campaign against terrorism after 9/11 in 2001.

The greater concern of the Filipinos is the terrorism that is perpetrated by those wielding the power of the state. This is the sole burden of the citizens of the individual states concerned. GMA's audacious attempt at making Burma reform itself in the tradition of democracy was met with cold rebuff.

The issue of poverty also addressed in the summit becomes an indictment against a government of a country, otherwise endowed with rich resources, but which remains impoverished because of the corruption of those who govern. GMA should have steered clear of the subject and spared herself the embarrassment.

—E. P. DAKANAY JR.,
43 Baltazar St., Philamlife Village,
Pamplona, Las Piñas City

A race equal to all others

THIS IS IN REPLY TO DAVE TABAniag, president of the Bahay Biyaya Student Council, who wrote that a "hero should not tower above his countrymen" and that he "should be someone like the rest of us." (PDI, 1/6/07) Precisely heroes do "tower" over their fellowmen and, through thousands of generations from ancient to present times, monuments have been erected in their honor. But this does not mean that they were not "human," for all of them did have an "Achilles' heel."

So, Jose Rizal might have had some faults, as his critics—from the Spanish colonial period in the Philippines to the present—have tirelessly pointed out. But heroes have one thing in common—they have sacrificed their self-interests for the happiness of others. In Rizal's case, he devoted his life's work—and sacrificed his very life and personal happiness—to the pursuit of freedom, dignity and prosperity for his fellow Filipinos.

Monuments are a way of a grateful people to say "thank you" to the hero. But even more, they are set up to remind us that heroes are models worth honoring and emulating; and that each one of us has the capability to rise above ourselves, that every human being has in himself the seed of a hero.

Tabaniag should not be dismayed that he cannot be like Rizal; but he should be proud that the Filipino race—his race—has produced a Rizal, and that a race that can produce a Rizal, a Lapu-Lapu and a Bonifacio, is not inferior in any way, that it is equal to all other races (including those in America and Europe); and that its people are also entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Therefore, Tabaniag should not ask if heroes are humans (they are). He should only ask why they became heroes despite their being humans—like ourselves.

—MANUEL F. ALMARIO,
mfalmario@yahoo.com

LGUs to blame for clogged streets

I AGREE WITH KRISTINE GRACE KHO: sidewalks are for people. (PDI, 1/19/07) And it is not just parked vehicles that have taken over the sidewalks. To be sure, local governments are to blame for the mess.

For example, a portion of Laonlaan Street in Manila—between Lacson Street and what used to be Dos Castillas—has now become a flower alley, with flower shops using that stretch to sell their wares. The Manila City Hall (particularly the Manila Traffic and Parking Bureau) and the barangay officials turn a blind eye to this mess which is aggravated by double-parking vehicles (both sides of the street have been turned into pay parking areas by a stupid ordinance). Thus, pedestrians are forced to walk in the middle of the street.

The Manila City government is waiting, maybe, for a tragedy to happen before it acts on this problem—just like what it did when several boarders died in a tragic fire that burned down a dormitory.

—OLIVER G. TUICO JR.,
otj1@yahoo.com

Breeding ground for tyrants

I AM GLAD THERE ARE STILL honest and sincere newspapermen, like Amando Doronila. I agree with his analysis titled "Iloilo raid shows GMA fascistic." (PDI, 1/22/07)

Indeed, a power-hungry administration is a breeding ground for modern-day Heydriches and Himmlers, creatures of Hitler's time.

—BENJAMIN JALECO,
6880 Drake Rd.,
West Bloomfield, MI 48322

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The ad interim appointee

COMMENTARY

Fr. Ranhilio Callangan Aquino

GRAMMAR TEACHES US THAT DEPENdent clauses have the function of modifiers. As a general rule, legal language abides by the conventions of grammar. This is one of the assumptions that must be made by one who reads the Constitution or a legislation. The Constitution provides that "the President shall nominate and, with the consent of the Commission on Appointments, appoint the heads of the executive departments, ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls xxx." The power to appoint an ambassador is vested in the President, a power made subject to the consent of the Commission on Appointments.

The problem with the Commission on Appointments is that it is an appurtenance of Congress which, unlike the executive, is not always in session. That the President's power to appoint does not cease even when Congress is in recess is made clear by the constitutional provision for ad interim appointments. The appointee is really, not only inchoately, appointed, but the appointment is effective only until disapproval by the Commission on Appointments or until the next adjournment of Congress.

Ad interim literally means "during the interim," and this has led some to conclude erroneously that an ad interim appointment is only temporary and that it is officious for the appointee to hold office before having been passed upon by the Commission on Appointments. Justice Isagani Cruz brilliantly points out the error of this conclusion by distinguishing between regular and ad interim appointees in the following manner: "The regular appointment is made only after the nomination is confirmed by the Commission on Appointments; the ad interim appointment is made before such confirmation."

Is it therefore proper for an ad interim appointee to assume and exercise office before confirmation? It follows that the answer is that he must, if he wishes to avoid being prosecuted for dereliction of duty. The character of this kind of an appointment was precisely the subject of a most elucidating *ponencia* by Justice Antonio Carpio in Matibag vs Benipayo, GR 149036 (April 2, 2002).

It will be well to heed the Supreme Court in respect to this question. An ad interim appointment is a permanent appointment, notwithstanding the fact that it is valid until disapproved by the Commission on Appointments or upon the next adjournment of Congress. Is that not prevaricating on the term "permanent"? No, maintains the Court, because once made, it is an appointment the President may no longer withdraw or revoke. The Court left no doubts about the question we raised earlier: "The appointee can at once assume office and exercise, as a de jure officer, all the powers pertaining to the office."

What happens then when the Commission on Appointments re-convenes? There are, logically, three possibilities. The appointment may be disapproved. When this is the case, this ends the story, for it is part of the ordained system of checks and balances, and constitutes a check that the legislature has upon the President's power to appoint. A bypassed appointment is not a disapproved appointment, and there is no objection at all to the issuance of a new appointment. This appointment may be in the nature of a nomination to the Commission on Appointments or an ad interim appointment. The third possibility, of course, is the assent of the Commission on Appointments to the ad interim appointment. This does not result in the appointment of the officer concerned; he has already been appointed by the President. It is exactly as the Constitution characterizes it: confirmation.

Is it constitutionally permissible for any member of the Commission on Appointments to wield a veto power that effectively results in the disapproval of an appointment notwithstanding the majority vote? It is my submission that no such veto power can be enjoyed by any member of the Commission on Appointments. The Constitution provides for confirmation by a "commission" and a "commission" is always a collectivity. To bestow—by internal rule or common agreement—veto powers on each member would constitute a form of "undue delegation" of power for, in effect, the power to appoint would depend on whether or not one member decides to veto the appointment. The Constitution provides for no veto power; none should be inferred.

In Pimentel vs HRET, the Supreme Court held that "proportional representation" was a non-negotiable requirement for the composition of the Commission on Appointments. What sense would proportional representation make if any single member could exercise a veto power?

Fr. Ranhilio Callangan Aquino is dean of the Graduate School of Law of San Beda College and chair of the Department of Jurisprudence and Legal Philosophy, Philippine Judicial Academy, Supreme Court of the Philippines.

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Out-of-school youths learn computers

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Lucena City

MEMBERS of the latest batch of students try the keyboards during a session of the free computer course in Lucena City.
DELFIN T. MALLARI JR.

IT WAS NOT THE usual graduation ceremony for 47 people, mostly out-of-school youths, who completed a three-month basic computer course on the outskirts of Lucena City in Quezon in December last year.

"Batch Masigasig" was atypical. There were siblings and even a mother and son who completed the course.

The "graduates" were emotional as they received certificates of completion in their school at the end of a short alley by M. L. Tagarao Street in the village of Ilayang Iyam.

They were able to finish the course for free. Their only "tuition" is an affirmation—through their signatures—in a simply worded "Memorandum of Agreement" with officials of the Upland Institute (UI). Both declared full commitment and obligation to finish the course.

'Contract'

"The document was not even notarized. But it symbolizes the beginning of our partnership with them in their quest for knowledge and our goal of helping them find alternative avenues to uplift themselves," Councilor Nicanor Pedro Jr., UI chair, said.

The "contract," Pedro said, aimed to secure the commitment of the parents in providing for the students' daily transportation and incidental expenses, like diskettes and CDs, among other conditions.

"In return, the students will not pay even a single centavo for tuition. We give their IDs for free. They bring their white shirts and we print them with the school logo also for free. They even surf the Internet for free. They don't have to spend here, except for their snacks," Pedro stressed.

Gloria de Leon, 49, a housewife, was overwhelmed upon receiving her diploma.

"I knew nothing about computers. I was even afraid to tinker with the keys the first time I sat in front of a unit. Now, I can surf with ease and help my children in school research. And I learned these all for free," De Leon said.

The three-month period is not solely devoted to computer learning, but also values formation

Her 17-year-old son Ronel, who is out of school due to financial constraints, was her classmate in the basic computer tutorial course.

Gloria said she was saving money to buy a used desktop computer.

"I can help my husband by accepting encoding jobs. If we're lucky and we're able to secure an Internet connection, I can also accept research jobs for college students," said De Leon, who reached fourth year in college.

Pedro's eldest son Niñel, a course instructor, was proud that his students are now computer literate. "All of them can now surf the Internet like a pro. Most of them like Friendster," Niñel said, referring to the popular website.

Three years ago, Pedro was faced with the dilemma of whether he would let go of their dilapidated ancestral house after finding out that it would be foreclosed by a government financial institution when his younger brother defaulted in paying the loan.

His daughter-in-law saved the house when she negotiated with the agency and accepted the obligation for the loan payment.

But the problem of what to do with the old, decrepit structure on the more than 400-square-meter lot confronted them.

Since the site is along the road, the family decided to put up a kindergarten and nursery school, resulting in the birth of the UI.

When the school opened after major renovations, Pedro found that the upper portion was of no use.

'Taksi' program

The idea of opening a basic computer school cropped up when son Niñel, who is also into a computer-for-hire business, told him that several unused, old computer units were piling up in the storage room.

As all the units needed only some tinkering to make it work again, Pedro decided to resurrect his information technology outreach program the Lucena Taksi or "Talino, Kasanayan at Sipag ng Lucenahin." The program was shelved in the late 1990s after a year due to politics.

Pedro, an activist of the Philippine College of Criminology in the early '70s, explained that "I want to empower the people by providing them with knowledge on the latest technology to help them improve their plight."

When the computers were ready, Pedro saturated the depressed parts of the city with posters for those interested to study a basic computer course for free.

"A number of cynical applicants appeared at the school office the following day, all wanting to know whether the course was really for free. They simply could not just believe that they only needed to sign the memorandum of agreement and nothing more," Pedro recalled with amusement.

The councilor said he did not use government funds for the program.

Personal fund

"I'm using my personal fund, which I'm earning from my media practice. Some fellow government officials and personal friends who share my convictions are also helping to keep the program going," said Pedro.

The three-month period is not solely devoted to computer learning. The school also sponsors leadership and values formation seminars and community service projects.

Pedro believes that the MOA will ensure the continuity of the project's goal.

The graduates are obliged to share with their communities the knowledge they had learned from the UI.

Quezon Rep. Proceso Alcala, the guest speaker in the graduation ceremony, said the institute "embodies the inspiring initiative of the private sector in the fight against ignorance and poverty in our midst."

Highway to boost tourism in Quezon beach areas

A P700-MILLION COASTAL ROAD PROJECT along the Tayabas Bay will link Quezon and Batangas provinces to boost tourism and industrial activities in Southern Luzon.

Bonifacio Seguit, director of the Department of Public Works and Highways for the Calabarzon (Cavite-Laguna-Batangas-Rizal-Quezon), said the project, which has started construction and is expected to be completed in two years, is part of the department's 10-year infrastructure program in Southern Tagalog.

"The road network is a priority project of President Macapagal-Arroyo to explore the full investment potentials in Quezon and Batangas provinces," Seguit said.

The 29.7-kilometer road network, that also includes three concrete bridges, starts in Barangay Salinas in Lucena City and will traverse the coastal villages of Talaan, Kantanyas and Bantilan in Sariaya town; Laiya, Malabigo in San Juan and Lobo town up to Batangas City.

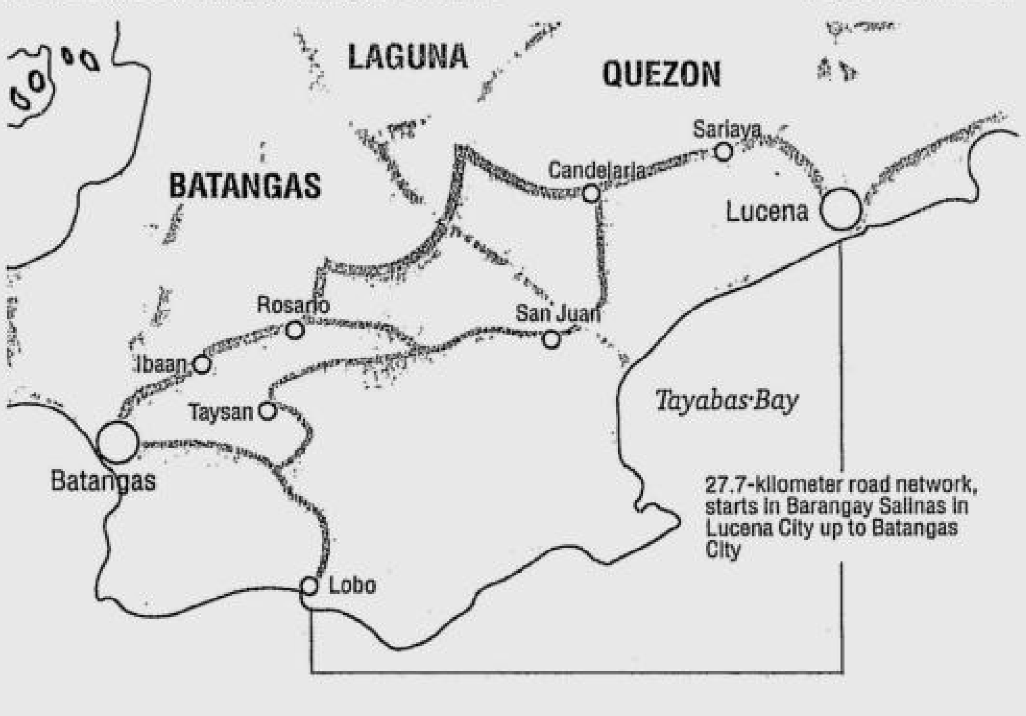
The planned coastal highway is 400 meters from the shoreline so as not to disturb the scenery along Tayabas Bay.

"With the promising success of the multisectoral protection and rehabilitation programs in Tayabas Bay, local and foreign tourists will surely come in droves because of the easy access and its strategic proximity to Metro Manila," Alcala said.

Two months ago, Alcala, a noted environmentalist, led a multisectoral initiative to protect whale sharks or "*butanding*" that have been sighted off Tayabas Bay in front of Lucena and Sariaya.

Celestial Flancia, acting DPWH-Lucena district engineer, said road construction had been going on smoothly despite petty problems posed by lot owners regarding right of way.

Delfin T. Mallari Jr.



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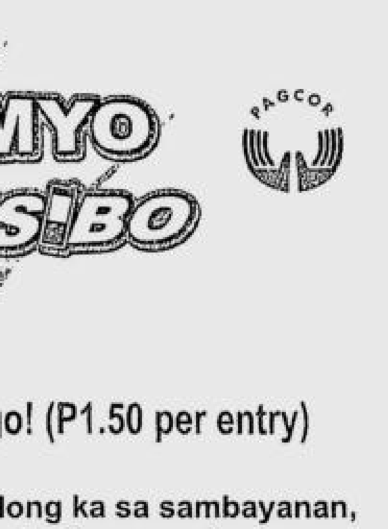

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Cops pressured to allow 'jueteng'

Some politicians using STL as gambling front

LUCENA CITY—DESPERATE FOR CASH FOR their election campaign war chest, some unidentified incumbent politicians in Quezon province have been forcing local police to allow the operations of the illegal numbers game "jueteng" in the guise of small town lottery.

"The local officials want us to just look the other way and allow the operation of jueteng under the shadow of STL (small town lottery). They threatened our chief of police with removal from the post should we disobey the order," a policeman from one Quezon town disclosed to the INQUIRER while submitting papers at the provincial headquarters.

The officer requested anonymity for fear that he would be removed from his post.

"They (politicians) have been negotiating with our chief of police to allow the operation even for just a couple of months during the campaign period. But our chief is holding his ground. He knows that they cannot just order his transfer due to a prevailing Comelec ruling," said the policeman.

The Comelec bans the transfer of public officials, including policemen, during the election period, which started Jan. 8.

Connections

He said a group of local gamblers, which has strong connections with the town officials, would run the jueteng operation.

Sought for comment, Senior Supt. Victorio Caragan Jr., provincial police chief, warned heads of the local police units not to allow the operation of any illegal numbers game in their areas.

"Whether jueteng or bookies, they should not allow its operation. The only numbers game that has been allowed by law is the STL. They should protect it from the professional gamblers and local officials who want to sabotage its operation," Caragan said.

But it was learned from a former jueteng supervisor, who turned STL sales representative, that some areas in the province had already resumed the underground operation of jueteng and bookies.

Operators

The informant identified a certain Biting Salvo as the principal jueteng operator in the Calauag-Tagkawayan area; the group of Edwin Perez, Manny Talavera, Dok Sulido, Ely Oabel and Elvis Luyahan in the Tayabas area; and Nelson Dimailig in the perimeter of Sariaya town.

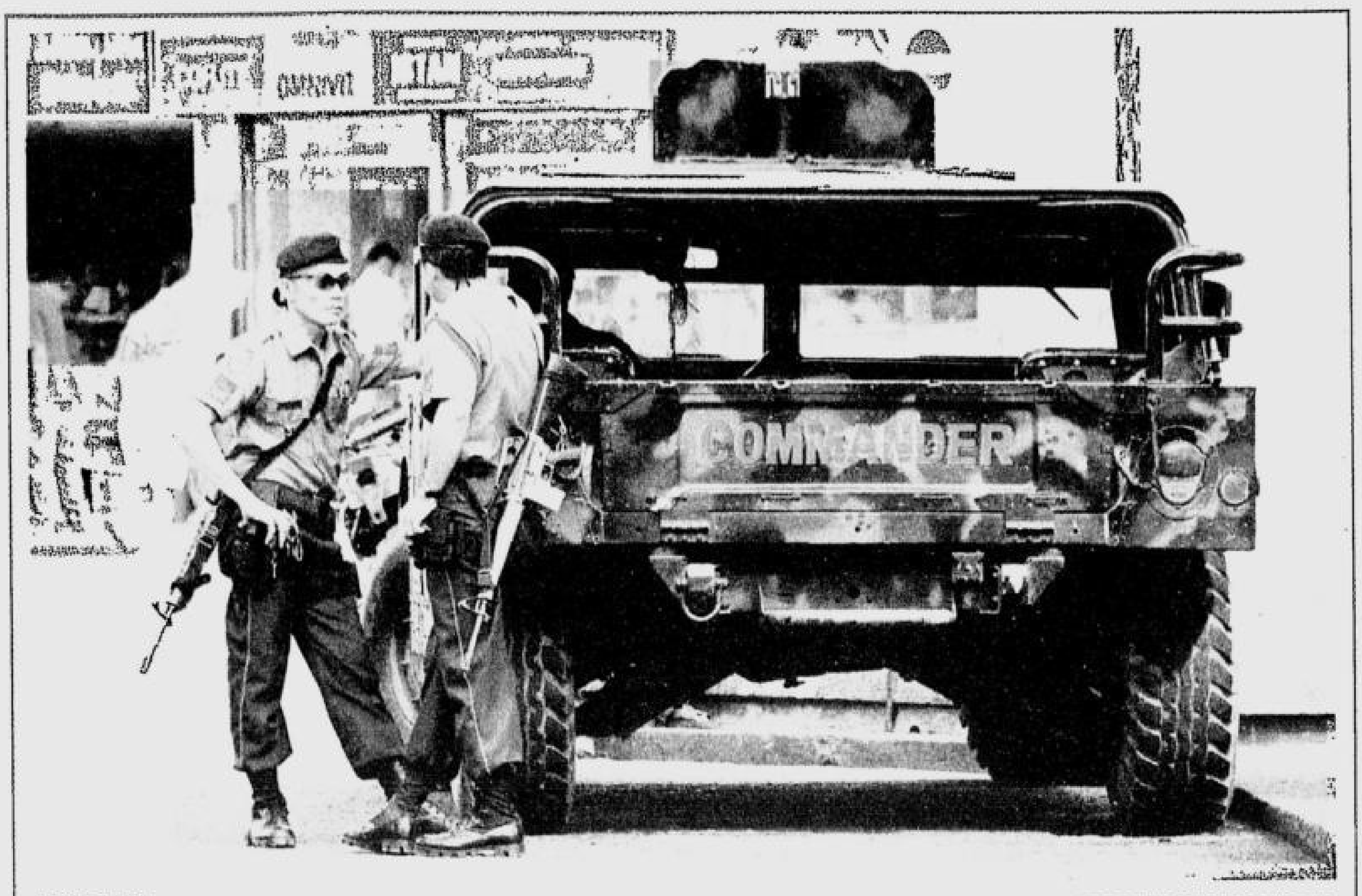
"They all maintain kangaroo-like operations to elude the police. They hold draws in remote areas and sometimes in running vehicles. There are times that they also use STL draws," he said.

Last week, provincial officials and the association of municipal mayors strongly denounced the planned revival of jueteng in the province to be run by a consortium of big-time gambling lords from Laguna and Batangas.

They said they were already contented with the benefits being provided by the government-run lottery.

But it seems that some local executives do not share the stand of the Quezon Mayors League.

The informant revealed that an incumbent mayor in the Bondoc Peninsula area recently hosted a meeting between a group of big-time gambling brokers and some local chief executives to pave the way for jueteng's revival in their localities. *Delfin Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon*



NO REST
Policemen armed with long firearms chat beside a military vehicle in downtown Davao City, which was placed on red alert following the killing in a military offensive of Abu Sayyaf leader Khadaffy Janjalani.
BING GONZALES/INQUIRER MINDANAO

Marines' return sparks fears of rights abuses

ZAMBOANGA CITY—AFTER MORE than 20 years, the Philippine Marines are back in Basilan.

But some political leaders and residents fear that the return would bring back human rights violations they allegedly committed in the 1980s.

Maj. Gen. Nelson Allaga, Philippine Marines Corps commandant, said the deployment of Marine soldiers "was part of the earliest plan for troop realignment based on geographical assignment."

Maj. Eugene Batara, spokesperson of the Western Mindanao Command, said the transfer of the Marines to Basilan was "ongoing and we expect them ... to pursue whatever the Army had started in the area, including the ongoing campaign of Culture of Peace."

Batara said the 103rd Army Brigade would be transferred to the Lanao provinces and the 1st Marine Brigade would take over the headquarters of the Army in Tabiawan in Isabela City.

The Culture of Peace campaign has brought residents closer to men in uniform who helped reduce family or political feud in the area, according to Brig. Gen. Raymundo Ferrer, 1st Tabak Division commander who once served as 103rd Army Brigade commander and initiated the campaign.

Basilan Bishop Martin Jumoad said the arrival of Marines in the province is "not quite accepted" by the residents, particularly the Isabeleños.

"Isabela residents are adamant to the transfer and occupation of Marines in Basilan. They fear the coming of Marines because of past experiences that led to a series of violent activities," the bishop said.

In a meeting with local leaders on Jan. 19, Jumoad learned from the residents that during the Marines' occupation in the 1980s, kidnapping was rampant, there were cases of harassment and abuses in Marine detachments, Isabela was razed, and the Abu Sayyaf Group came to life.

Jumoad said the peace campaign "managed to restore peace where different faith communities live harmoniously."

But Allaga said it was unfair to accuse the Marines of committing rights violations in the 1980s.

"I was there as an intelligence officer then and the Marines had nothing to do with the violence there. It was actually a fight between a lawless group against another armed group with strong political backings." Allaga said. *Julie Alipala, Inquirer Mindanao*

Farmers ask gov't to finance traditional rice, corn types

BAGUIO CITY—A FARMERS' group called on the government to provide funds to develop and enhance the cultivation of traditional rice and corn varieties instead of pouring money into hybrid rice varieties.

Fernando Bagyan, secretariat member of Apit-Tako, said his group is airing the appeal amid the announcement, during the special summit of Southeast Asian leaders on agriculture last week, that China was bringing in P240 billion worth of investment that would partly finance the production of hybrid rice and corn varieties.

"Hybrid varieties [would spell] death to farmers. Aside from displacing our traditional varieties, it would only give more opportunity for land grabbing because [the cultivation of] these varieties will require vast tracts of land," he said.

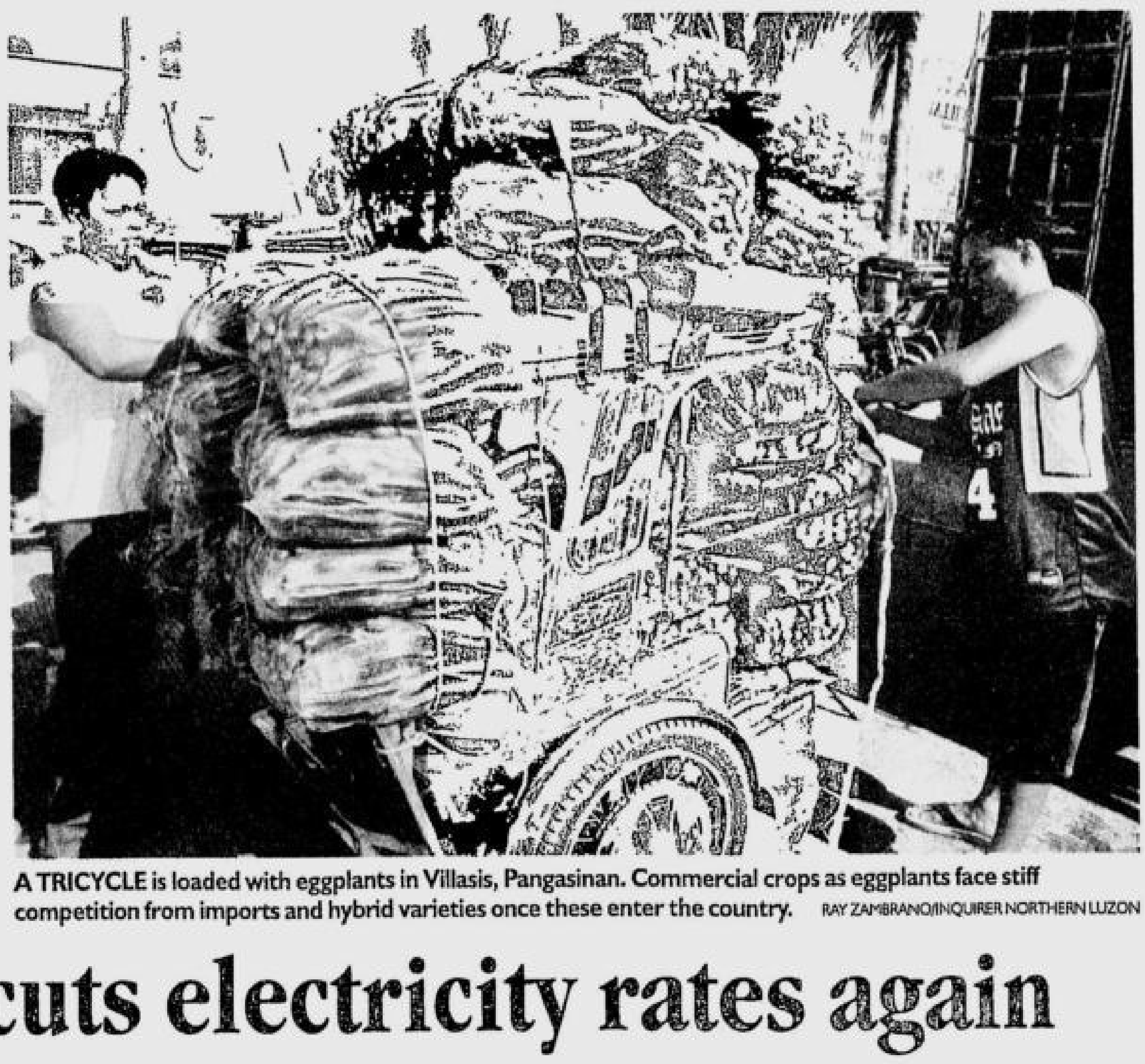
Citing Department of Agriculture records, Bagyan said P43 billion would be set aside to develop hybrid rice and corn varieties while P5.3 billion would be allotted to develop off-season fruits and vegetables for export to Japan, Korea and Hong Kong, among others.

He said local farmers have always feared trade agreements with other countries because these do not benefit them.

"Of course these investors come here not because of goodwill, they come here for profit. What the government is doing right now is they offer the local agriculture primarily for business and not for development which will benefit the farmers and the consuming public," he said.

Patricio Ananayo, chief of the agribusiness and marketing assistance division of the DA in Cordillera, said the government has yet to allot funds to revive indigenous varieties in the Philippines because they are considered "high value crops."

"The fund [from China would be] directed more to hybrid varieties because our country wants to attain food security. High value crops cannot bring food security [because these are low yielding]," Ananayo told the INQUIRER. *Desiree Caluza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*



A TRICYCLE is loaded with eggplants in Villasis, Pangasinan. Commercial crops as eggplants face stiff competition from imports and hybrid varieties once these enter the country. RAY ZAMBRANO/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

Gov't wants to get 62-ha Escalante land

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BACOLOD CITY—THE LEGAL battle over a 62-hectare area in Escalante City continued with the Office of the Solicitor General asking the court to allow the government to claim ownership of the property.

The Office of the Solicitor General has filed a petition for escheat before the Regional Trial Court of San Carlos asking that ownership of the estate of the late Juan Caminos, that covers the bulk of the property in the center of Escalante City, be declared in favor of the Republic of the Philippines.

The Solicitor General argued that Juan Caminos died on July 15, 1939 and left no heirs entitled to his estate.

Escheat is a proceeding whereby the state, by virtue of its sovereignty, steps in and claims the real and personal property of a person who dies and leaves no heirs, Solicitor General Eduardo Nachura said in his petition filed Nov. 30, 2006.

Those who claimed to be Caminos' heirs have failed to prove kinship, Nachura added.

In an interview, Escalante Mayor Santiago Barcelona said the estate of Juan Caminos, located in Barangay Balintawak, covers about 62 hectares, or about 80 percent of the Escalante City proper. The city has a total land area of over 19,000 hectares.

On the other hand, Amado Parreño, lawyer of the heirs of Juan Caminos, said the claim of the Solicitor General would "fall flat on its face as it has no leg to stand on."

Parreño noted that a Court of Appeals ruling, dated Feb 18, 1981 granting the claim on the property of Juan Caminos to his heirs, became final and executory on Jan. 14, 1982.

Negros Or. co-op cuts electricity rates again

By Romy Amarado
Inquirer Visayas

DUMAGUETE CITY—THE NEGROS Oriental II Electric Cooperative (Noreco II) implemented another round of reduction in their rates starting December 2006.

Noreco II finance manager Dionefred Macahig said that the cooperative reduced its power rates by 32 centavos per kilowatt-hour for residential consumers and 12.60 centavos per kwh for commercial users.

Macahig said the rate reduction was implemented beginning last December until December 2008, on orders of the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC).

Each of the Noreco II residential and commercial consumers would have an average reduction in their monthly power bill by more than P31 and P63, respectively.

Macahig said the Noreco II service area covers 11 municipalities and three cities in the province, and serves over 71,000 residential and 7,210 commercial consumers.

The total rate reduction would reach more than P24 million for two years, he said.

The rate reduction is mandated under Republic Act (RA) 9136, which is known as the Electric Power Industry Regulatory Act (Epira law).

The law also requires the condonation of loans granted by the National Electrification Administration to electric cooperatives used in funding rural electrification programs.

The Power Sector Assets Liabilities Management (PSALM) Corp. would assume these loans.

Noreco II has a P105-million debt to NEA, which was condoned, he added.

Section 60 of the Epira Law states that "the ERC shall ensure a reduction in the rates of electric cooperatives commensurate with the resulting savings due to the removal of the amortization payment of the loans."

Noreco II started reducing its rates in 2001, following the effectivity of the Epira Law.

The decrease, from June 2001 to January 2006, however, was only three centavos per kwh since the ERC has not set a specific figure at the time.

In February 2006, Macahig said the ERC issued a provisional order pegging the reduction of the power rate from that month to November 2006, at 19 centavos per kwh for residential consumers and eight centavos per kwh for business establishments.

Escaped inmate named 1 of gunmen in slaying of vice mayor, 2 men

By Felipe V. Celino
Inquirer Visayas

ROXAS CITY—POLICE NAMED A man, who escaped from the Capiz Rehabilitation Center 20 years ago, as one of the gunmen in the slaying of Vice Mayor Victor Gardoce of Tapaz town and two others.

Chief Insp. Pablito Silvestre, deputy provincial director for administration, said Manuel Bianeza, 45, of Poblacion Ilawod, Tapaz, was identified as the second suspect in the shooting of Gardoce, Carida Village chief Leonardo Gimeno and the vice mayor's driver, Anthony Gequillo, on Dec. 30, 2006, in front of the Taft barangay hall.

Chief Insp. Julius Jacinto, provincial chief of intelligence, said police were gathering evidence to link Bianeza to the killing after an informant told them about Bianeza's involvement.

Jail guard Rodolfo Cereneo said Bianeza escaped from jail sometime in January 1985. He has pending cases of robbery with homicide in a court here. He escaped when Typhoon "Undang" destroyed the jail's fences in November 1984.

Earlier, three witnesses identified Noel Fuentespina, driver of provincial board member Ronald Exmundo, as one of the gunmen. Police arrested him for involvement in a different murder and frustrated case pending in a court of Iloilo City.

Senior Supt. Reynaldo Rafal, chief of Task Force Gardoce, said earlier that the Gardoce case was now considered "90-percent solved" after multiple murder charges were filed against Fuentespina and four other persons at the provincial prosecutor's office.

Fuentespina has denied he was one of the gunmen. The board member also denied any hand in the killing.

Gardoce and his two companions where shot in the evening of Dec. 30, 2006 outside the barangay hall. They were buried on Sunday at the Tapaz public cemetery.

The burial was attended by hundreds of the vice mayor's supporters, friends and relatives.

Gardoce's relatives continue to cry out for justice.

ARNOLD ALMACEN/INQUIRER VISAYAS

CURIOSITY
A child glances at a group of Aeta youngsters sitting on a sidewalk in Iloilo City. Aetas flock to the city during its celebration of the Dinagyang Festival to sell their handmade products or beg for alms, as this group was doing.

NBI files raps vs 2 drug gang members for murder plot

SUBIC, ZAMBALES—THE National Bureau of Investigation filed murder and frustrated murder charges against two suspected members of a drug syndicate operating in Subic, Zambales, for the attempted killing of a village councilor in 2004.

Joel Curameng, NBI-Olongapo City chief, also filed similar charges against six suspected hired killers who were involved in the murder attempt on Orlando Timbol, village chair of Calapacuan.

Two of the hired guns were arrested for alleged involvement in separate murder cases and are now detained at the Olongapo City jail.

Charged were Julito Reyes, Rosito Calledo, Ronnie Miol, Gerald Donque, Bani Gapul, Rico Nebreda Bernaldez and two unidentified suspects.

The NBI said Reyes, the suspected mastermind, drew up an elaborate plot. He ordered three hit men, who were not known to each other, to do the job in one place at the same time, to ensure that the target was killed.

Assassination attempt

Timbol, who was hit in the right shoulder and left leg, escaped on his motorcycle and survived. However, two teenagers—Jean Romamban, 16, and Maron Diaz, 13—were hit by stray bullets and died.

Timbol said that as a councilor in his village, he once called several suspected illegal drug pushers to a meeting and warned them to stop their trade.

He suspected that the plot to kill him was hatched after that meeting.

He identified Gapul as one of those who attacked him.

Three months after, a witness, Alejandro Balida, identified five more possible suspects whom he reportedly saw at the crime scene before the shooting.

"*Magkakatropa po kami, kaya alam ko ang mga ginagawa nila* (I know them and I know about their activities)," Balida told the NBI in a statement.

Hiring three gunmen only proved a liability for Reyes when one confessed to his role in the killing and identified his accomplices two years after the crime.

Murder case

The NBI said Bernaldez, who was arrested because of a separate murder case, admitted to being one of those who shot Timbol. He pointed to Reyes, also known as "Tisoy," as the one who offered him P60,000 to kill the village official.

Bernaldez said he met Reyes in the house of Calledo a week before the attack on Oct. 5, 2004. He said Reyes gave him a P30,000 down payment during that meeting.

He also identified Miol as one of the three men who actually shot Timbol.

Bernaldez said he came to know Miol after a man on a motorcycle took them both to Barangay San Isidro, also in Subic, immediately after the shooting. He said he did not know the third gunman.

Almost two years after the attack, Bernaldez told the NBI that Miol had been detained at the Olongapo jail for another murder case.

Bernaldez said Reyes had wanted Timbol killed because the latter was considered an "obstacle" to Reyes' illegal drug trade. *Ansbert Joaquin, Inquirer Central Luzon*

Kids take center stage at Marinduque feast

JOE HARESH TANODRA/CONTRIBUTOR

THE ORIGINAL Ati-Atihan Festival in Kalibo with its street dancers.

STA. CRUZ, MARINDUQUE—The heart-shaped island province of Marinduque celebrated its own version of the Feast of the Sto. Niño with hundreds of children participating in the Ati-Atihan street dancing parade, and hundreds more converging at the Sta. Cruz town Plaza.

The annual festivity turned out to be a celebration of the children's dynamism and early devotion to the Child Jesus.

The 13 participating barangays in the festivity were represented by groups of 30–50 children, aged 4 to 12 years old, in the street dancing competition.

Accompanied by their parents and guardians, the children—stained with black paints or charcoal on their faces and body, and dressed in colorful tribal costumes—swayed and danced to the beat of drums and shouted "Hala Bira" while prancing around with make-believe spears and swords.

Devotees attended the parade with their Sto. Niños clad in colorful and elegant costumes.

What caught the eyes of spectators were mascots whose bodies were painted with messages like "Muling Babangon ang Marinduque (Marinduque will rise again)."

The messages provided a sense of hope for the Marinduqueños after successive supertyphoons last year devastated the province. *Gerald Gene Querubin, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

ROUNDUP

Davao cops told to solve killings

DAVAO CITY—Police chief Senior Supt. Jaime Morente has ordered all police precinct commanders to intensify their information gathering to get to the bottom of vigilante-style killings in the city. Morente said he told the station commanders to focus on the pattern of the killings. For the last five years, at least 640 people, most of them with criminal records, have been killed by motorcycle-riding gunmen, police records show. At least two suspects have been arrested but were released for lack of evidence.

Rizalene Acac, Inquirer Mindanao

NPA rebels kill 1 in Agusan

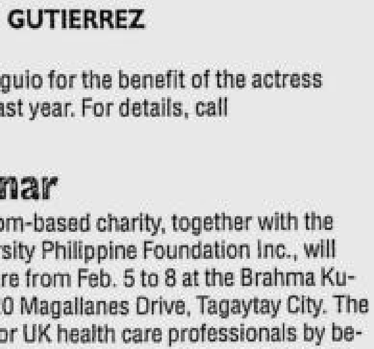
DAVAO CITY—Communist rebels barged into several houses in Las Nieves, Agusan del Norte, on Sunday, killing at least one person and wounding two others. Maj. Gen. Jose Barbieto, commander of the Army's 4th Infantry Division based in Cagayan de Oro City, said about 20 New People's Army (NPA) rebels raided the houses at around 2 a.m. and killed Siomo Singa-an. Barbieto said the rebels fled after the incident. ***Allan Nawal, Inquirer Mindanao***

Village chief gunned down

TABACO CITY—Unidentified gunmen aboard a motorcyle shot dead a village chief, identified as Ananias Burce, in Barangay Bantayan, 9 kilometers west of this city. Burce, 49, village chief of Oras, was riding on a motorcycle with his son-in-law Nestor Dacuya when they were stopped by another motorbike at around 10:30 a.m. Sunday. One of the killers pulled a .45 cal. pistol and fired several times at Burce before speeding toward Ligao City, police said. The victim was pronounced dead on arrival at a city hospital.

Job Belen, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Benefit shows for Chin Chin in Baguio



GUTIERREZ

A PHOTO exhibit by Budo de Guzman, titled "Out of the Ashes," will be opened at the Bliss Café in Baguio City this Saturday on 7-9 p.m. for the benefit of movie actress Chin Chin Gutierrez, according to a news release. Bliss will donate 15 percent of its gross sales on the exhibit opening and 10 percent of sales during the exhibit, which runs up to Feb. 23. At 9 p.m. of the same day, various artists will sing, dance and read poetry at Ayuyang in Baden Powell Inn on Governor Pack Road, Baguio for the benefit of the actress whose house was razed in December last year. For details, call 09178464728 or 442-5836.

Free health care seminar

THE JANKI Foundation, a United Kingdom-based charity, together with the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University Philippine Foundation Inc., will conduct a training on values in healthcare from Feb. 5 to 8 at the Brahma Kumaris Center for Spiritual Learning, 1020 Magallanes Drive, Tagaytay City. The training has opened up a new practice for UK health care professionals by becoming spiritual caregivers/therapists serving colleagues, patients and their families. For details, e-mail manila@ph.bkwsu.org or call (02) 890-7960.

Traders speak on wage hike

DAVAO CITY—The Davao City Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc. (DCCCII) said the most reasonable and best method of determining just wages is through collective bargaining between management and its employees and not legislation. The business group said in a statement that instead of resorting to "gimmicky" to boost its image, Congress should have looked for ways to strengthen the Wage Rationalization Act. It warned that the legislated wage increase of P125 will lead to the closure of many businesses or retrenchment of workers it was aiming to benefit.

Judy Quiros, Inquirer Mindanao

Indian lender seized, freed for ₱900,000

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—A middle-aged Indian was abducted by armed men in Imus, Cavite, on Monday and was released hours later after relatives paid P900,000 in ransom, a police official said Tuesday.

A ranking police official, who asked not to be identified as he was not authorized to speak on the matter, said the victim, a native of Punjab, India, was engaged in moneylending business in Cavite.

He was seized by four heavily armed men at around 7 a.m. in Barangay Anabu, Imus town.

He said the victim, whom he did not name for security reasons, was riding on his motorcycle when the kidnappers, on board a Starex van and a Nissan Sentra, blocked his path and ordered him to board the car at gunpoint.

The INQUIRER source said the kidnappers immediately contacted the Filipino wife of the victim and demanded ransom.

After brief negotiations, the kidnappers released the businessman unscathed somewhere in Baclaran, Parañaque at around 9 p.m.

Supt. Efren Castro, Imus police chief, confirmed the kidnapping case and said the victim was now back in his house.

He, however, raised doubts if it was indeed a kidnapping case.

He said police were still investigating the incident and had invited the victim and his wife to the police station for questioning.

Business concern

In a mobile phone conversation, Castro said the victim had yet to confirm if his family gave ransom to his supposed abductors.

"We still cannot say if it's a kidnapping case because the victim's family did not say if they paid ransom," Castro said.

But the INQUIRER source confirmed that it was a kidnapping and that they have already identified the syndicate behind it.

He said that shortly after the kidnapping, the president of a big organization of Indian businessmen based in the country contacted him and sought his assistance.

He said he immediately deployed his men to conduct a surveillance operation.

The source said that during the operation, it was discovered that the criminals were also behind the kidnappings of other Indians in Nueva Ecija.

"This syndicate likes to target undocumented Indian businessmen because their victims do not lodge complaints with the police," he said.

He added that the group included several Indians as cohorts.

Indian gangsters

He said the Indian gang members were the ones who facilitate the negotiations between the victims' families and the syndicate.

"They sometimes lend money to the victims so they can pay the ransom. After that, they will take over whatever businesses their hapless victims have," the source added.

He lamented that just like in other kidnap-for-ransom cases, the victim in Cavite refused to cooperate with authorities.

"These foreigners should understand that without their help, we cannot file charges against the suspects even if we have already identified them," he said.

He said they have already launched a follow-up operation for the possible apprehension of the kidnappers. *Marlon Ramos, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

> 'This syndicate likes to target undocumented Indian businessmen...'

SPORTS

Suns ground 'Phoenix of East'

WASHINGTON—TWO-TIME MVP STEVE Nash and the Phoenix Suns humiliated the Washington Wizards, 127-105, on Tuesday to win their 14th straight NBA game and avenge a demoralizing early season loss to the Southeast Division leaders.

Nash had 27 points on 11-of-13 shooting and had 14 assists to lead seven Suns scoring in double figures against the team dubbed as the "Phoenix Suns of the East."

"Steve Nash is the ultimate playmaker," Wizards coach Eddie Jordan told reporters. "He is the MVP for reasons we saw tonight. He was picking us apart."

Washington snapped the Suns' 15-game winning streak with a 144-139 overtime victory in December before a raucous sellout crowd of more than 18,000 at the US Airways Center in Phoenix.

This time, with a 13-game winning streak on the line, the Suns outplayed, outworked and outhustled the Wizards from the opening tip-off.

"We have nights like this," Suns coach Mike D'Antoni said. "We can score. Some nights are better than others and tonight we just hit all our shots."

Phoenix (33-8) raced to a 25-11 lead, deploying its run-and-gun offense to perfection while the Wizards misfired on 12 of their first 15 shots.

The Suns had a 41-20 lead after the opening quarter and the Wizards spent the rest of the game trying to play catch-up.

"That first quarter was as good as it gets," Nash said.

In Orlando, Florida, Dirk Nowitzki had 33 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists, and Josh Howard added 25 points to help the Dallas Mavericks crush the Orlando Magic, 111-95, for their eighth straight victory.

In Philadelphia, Kyle Korver scored 25 points, Andre Iguodala added 20 and the 76ers held on to clip New Orleans, 102-96.

In Chicago, Luol Deng scored 18 points and Kirk Hinrich added 12 points and 12 assists to lead the Bulls past the Atlanta Hawks, 94-86. *Reuters, AP*

NBA TODAY ON BASKETBALL TV

10 a.m.—Memphis vs. Utah (replays @ 4 p.m. & 9:30 p.m.)

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SAMSUNG

Beermen, Kings take 1-0 leads

GAMES TOMORROW (*Araneta Coliseum*)
4:35 p.m.—Barangay Ginebra vs Talk 'N Text
7:20 p.m.—Red Bull vs San Miguel

By Musong R. Castillo

THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE rusty, but it takes more than just creaky, unoiled limbs to keep powerhouse San Miguel Beer and Barangay Ginebra down.

The elimination round topnotchers were impressive despite coming off month-long layoffs, with the Beermen rallying for a 114-109 nipping of Red Bull, and the Gin Kings unforgiving in a 115-100 victory over Talk 'N Text at the start of their Talk 'N Text Philippine Cup semifinal series last night at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Beermen committed a conference-high 26 errors but played near-perfect at crunchtime, overhauling a nine-point fourth-quarter deficit to gain a psychological edge in the best-of-seven series.

Ginebra, meanwhile, warmed up in the first period and turned up the heat in the second, leading by as many as 29 points at one stage even without injured superstar center Eric Menk.

The Kings finally hurdled the Phone Pals for the first time in three meetings in this tournament after getting 34 points from Mark Caguioa and heady performances from practically everyone else.

HONTIVEROS: Clutch baskets AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Late Sports

More stories on A21 to 24

"Our two losses (to Talk 'N Text) stayed with the players," said Ginebra's Jong Uichico, who took over as head coach after leaving San Miguel during the off-season. "We came out all fired up.

"This (win) is not a gauge of how the series will go," he added. "Of course, you'd like to be 1-0 up, but it does not in anyway make the series."

Ronald Tubid scored 18 points for Ginebra, Rafi Reavis scattered 16 and Billy Mamaril had 13 like Jayjay Helterbrand, who also dished out a career-high 16 assists.

Ren-Ren Ritualo had 24 points to pace the Phone Pals, who also got 21 from Anthony Washington but only 14 points and four rebounds from Asi Taulava. Jimmy Alapag, the tournament's top assists man with an average of close to eight, only had eight markers and four feeds.

Two-time MVP Danny Ildefonso and Dondon Hontiveros sparkled in the fourth period to frustrate the Barako.

It was also the eighth straight win for San Miguel, which has not lost since tumbling against Talk 'N Text last Nov. 19.

"The value (of this win) is that it told us how far we can (possibly) go," coach Chot Reyes, whose last game came last Christmas, said.

"This (win) really does not tell me anything other than it's 1-0," he added. "It's still going to be a long series. And if we look at the past Game 1 winners (Sta. Lucia and Purefoods, who were both eliminated in the quarterfinals), then we're in trouble."

San Miguel actually trailed by 11 late in the third, and was staring at a 95-86 deficit with 9:44 to go before a 16-5 blitzkrieg spearheaded by Hontiveros shoved the Beermen on top, 102-100 heading into the final 5:24.

The scores:

First Game

SAN MIGUEL 114—Seigle 21, Hontiveros 18, Ildefonso 18, Tugade 10, Racela 10, Adducul 8, Peña 8, Tenorio 7, Gonzales 6, Wilson 4, Espinas 2, Calaguio 2.

RED BULL 109—Villanueva 20, Valenzuela 20, Pennisi 15, Fonacier 14, Najorda 9, Cruz 8, Sharma 7, Alvarez 6, Membrere 4, Robinson 4, Baguio 2, Bugia 0.

Quarters: 25-27, 56-all, 82-88, 114-109

Second Game

BARANGAY GINEBRA 115—Caguioa 34, Tubid 18, Reavis 16, Mamaril 13, Helterbrand 13, Abarrientos 9, Hatfield 7, Salvacion 5, Macapagal 0, Holper 0.

TALK 'N TEXT 100—Ritualo 24, Washington 21, Taulava 14, De Ocampo 13, Carey 8, Alapag 8, Noble 7, Cardona 4, Belano 1, Fran 0, Pablo 0.

Quarters: 32-34, 64-45, 94-72, 115-100

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Mid-Day SUERTRES Evening
6 5 4 | 3 2 9
(All in exact order)
MEGALOTTO 6/45
25 32 37 38 41 43
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Montalban dump reopened to avert crisis

Turf issue awaits resolution, but mayor insists on control of site

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THE METROPOLITAN MANILA DEVElopment Authority (MMDA) has averted what could have been a garbage crisis in the metropolis.

Rodriguez, Rizal Mayor Pedro Cuerpo yesterday decided to reopen the Montalban Solid Waste Disposal Facility in his town which he ordered closed at noon Tuesday after a turf war with the provincial government.

But after a dialogue with MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando the same day, Cuerpo changed his mind.

"The facility is temporarily open while we are still resolving our issues. This will save Metro Manila from a garbage crisis," the mayor told the INQUIRER.

Cuerpo shut down the 14-hectare sanitary landfill which accommodates trash from 10 of the 17 towns and cities in Metro Manila after the Rizal provincial government tried to remove the pipes installed by a private contractor for a methane gas project he had authorized inside the facility.

According to Rizal legal officer Edgardo Samson, only the Sangguniang Panlalawigan or provincial board had the sole authority to enter into agreements which involved power generation and environmental effects.

MONTALBAN/A18

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Electronic ad given deadline by DPWH, or else …

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC Works and Highways yesterday gave the owner of an electronic billboard in Makati City until Friday to take it down as the department continued its crackdown on illegal billboards in the metropolis.

The electronic billboard, located in a pocket park near the corner of Guadalupe and Edsa, is owned by Jemah Ads Inc.

Emmanuel Cuntapay, director of the DPWH National Building Code Development Office, said the installation of the billboard should not have been allowed in the area in the first place.

According to him, public parks should be free of billboards and local governments should not allow these advertising structures to be built there.

Based on a Court of Appeals ruling issued in 2000, public parks are beyond the commerce of man and could not be the subject of a lease contract, he added.

"If they want to do business, they should do it the right place," Cuntapay said.

He warned Jemah Ads that if the advertising structure is not taken down by Friday, the DPWH would be forced to tear it down.

Cuntapay also questioned how Jemah Ads was able to get a permit to erect the billboard in the area. He said that to construct a billboard, a building permit is needed. For one to get a building permit, there must be proof of ownership, he added.

The DPWH official said he would check whether the Makati City Council entered into an agreement with the company for the billboard's installation.

At the same time, Cuntapay asked Jemah Ads to bring to the DPWH documents showing they were given permission to put up the billboard.

Sought for comment, Jemah Ads' vice president for sales and marketing Lito de Leon said they would comply with the DPWH's instructions. They would also appeal the department's directive for them to take down their billboard, he added.

The DPWH went on with its crackdown on illegal billboards yesterday, dismantling several advertising structures on Quezon Avenue, on Edsa near the Manila Seedling compound and in Sta. Mesa, Manila.

Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. said the dismantling operations against illegal and hazardous billboards should be done regularly, especially during the dry months of the year.

"We must take advantage of the good weather and ensure public safety by continuing the strict implementation of the administrative orders of President Macapagal-Arroyo," Ebdane said.

The President had ordered the dismantling of illegal or hazardous billboards after Typhoon "Milenyo" swept through the country on Sept. 28. Metro Manila was struck directly by the typhoon and strong winds caused the collapse of several advertising structures.

One fell on top of a vehicle, killing the driver instantly. It also hit a van and a bus, leaving several persons injured.

Pasig rotunda repair work causes jam

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

EXPECT SNAIL-PACED TRAFFIC if you're on your way to do business at the Pasig City Hall, the city police, and the public market in the next three days.

The rotunda leading to the city proper is currently under repair following a series of excavations and pipe-laying projects initiated by the Manila Water Company two months ago.

Because of the road repairs, the eastbound lane on Pasig Boulevard from the corner of C5 Road to the corner of Sixto Avenue has been closed to traffic since Tuesday.

The rotunda route is the most frequented by motorists on their way to the city proper where City Hall, the Justice Hall, the Eastern Police District Headquarters, the Pasig City Police and the Mutya ng Pasig Public Market are located.

"The repair work will be completed in three days. We expect the boulevard to be passable on Sunday morning," city excavation permit office head Carlota Cruz told the INQUIRER.

Many motorists and pedestrians were caught unaware by the move. Commuters living on the affected streets had to walk almost a kilometer to catch rides on C5 Road.

Glenn Quiton, who was late for work by 40 minutes yesterday, said he had to endure heavy traffic as motorists were diverted to alternate routes.

Those on their way to the city who were advised to take the new bridge in Bagong Ilog from C5 Road, however, were stopped by ongoing work on a drainage system along Raymundo Street.

Marketgoers, on the other hand, were told to take the Sandoval Bridge in Barangay Ugong.

Because of the jam, some drivers have stopped plying their routes, making the lives of commuters more difficult.

Traffic enforcers were deployed on side streets to ease the flow.

But the huge volume of vehicles on the road quickly made traveling on the narrow alternate routes a nightmare, motorists told the INQUIRER.

Fire in QC leaves 150 families homeless

By Miko L. Morelos

AT LEAST 150 FAMILIES LOST their houses when a fire broke out in Barangay Botocan, Quezon City before midnight Tuesday.

The fire started in a two-story house in Area 6 before spreading to almost 50 other houses which were mostly made of light materials, arson investigator SFO4 Jose Nagpacan of Quezon City Fire Department said.

No one was reported killed in the incident although a resident, Felix Bante, was slightly injured while fleeing from his burning house.

Firefighters declared the blaze under control at past 2 a.m. yesterday.

Barangay Botocan is located behind Camp Caringal, the headquarters of the Quezon City Police District.

Supt. Leslie Castillo, camp commander, said the fire broke out near the logistics building where the camp's armory is situated. A wall separates the building from the residential area.

Castillo said they immediately moved flammable materials away from the building, which was about 10 meters away from the fire.

Safe place

"It's normal to move explosive materials to a safe place," he added. "We took precautionary measures so that any untoward incident could be avoided."

Fire officials have not yet pinpointed the cause of the blaze or the total worth of property damaged.

But according to Castillo, who said he spoke with some of the residents, the fire was reportedly caused by a liquefied petroleum gas that was left open.

"According to people who live there who I got to talk to, there was a child who was cooking food who left the LPG tank open. This was what started the fire," he told the INQUIRER.

Republic of the Philippines
SOCIAL SECURITY COMMISSION
Makati City

SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM,
Petitioner,
- versus -
ALLAN D. KHO,
Respondent SSC CASE NO. 1-16298-06
x - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - x

SUMMONS

MR. ALLAN D. KHO

GREETINGS:

You are hereby required to file within fifteen (15) days from the date of publication of this Summons with the Office of the Clerk of the Commission, 12th Floor, SSS (Makati) Building, 6782 Ayala Avenue corner Rufino Street (formerly Herrera Street), Makati City, your Answer to the Petition filed by the petitioner for collection of SS contributions for the period from January 2000 to March 2000 and October 2003 to May 2004 in the amount of P30, 688.00 plus the 3% per month penalty liability for late payment thereof computed as of June 25, 2004 amounting to P31,488.79.

You are further required to serve a copy of your Answer upon the petitioner through Atty. Ligaya T. Bato, at the SSS Cebu City Branch Office, Suarez Bldg., cor. Gorordo & Escario Sts., Cebu City.

If you fail to answer within the time prescribed above, the Hearing Commissioner, may upon motion of the petitioner or *motu-proprio*, declare you in default and shall forthwith proceed to receive the petitioner's evidence *ex-parte* and threafter recommend to the Commission either the granting or denial of the petition as the evidence may warrant.

SOORDERED

Makati City, Philippines, January 3, 2007.

SOCIAL SECURITY COMMISSION

(PDI – Jan. 25, 2007)

RP couples dare Hungary's best to kissing match to reclaim title

By Tarra Quismundo

ACCOMPANIED BY AN ATI-ATIHAN BAND, some 50 couples clad in red marched yesterday to the gates of the Consulate of Hungary at the intersection of Makati and Gil Puyat Avenues in Makati City to attend what they called a "kissing de avance."

Instead of provocative, political messages, the messages written on placards carried by the ralliers read: "Mas Masarap ang Kiss ng Pinoy (Pinoys are better kissers)," "Pinoy Kissers Unite," "Record ng Halik, sa 'Pinas Ibalik (Return the kissing record to the Philippines)," "Wanted: Kissing Partner. We Can Beat Hungary Together," and "Hungary, Goodbye Kiss Naman 'Dyan (Hungary, give us a goodbye kiss)."

The couples were there to challenge Hungary to a kissing match, a run-up to the Lovapalooza kissfest set on Feb. 10 at the SM Mall of Asia by a toothpaste company. For the past four years, the company has been encouraging couples to kiss for several seconds in celebration of Valentine's Day.

In 2004, the Philippines landed in the Guinness World Book of Records for the most number of couples (5,270) kissing simultaneously. The following year, however, Hungary broke the country's record.

Organizers said that this year, the Philippines will attempt to wrestle the record away from Hungary.

"This is an awareness rally because many people do not know that Hungary beat us for the kissing record in 2005 so we want everyone to be part of Lovapalooza this year. It's a matter of Filipino pride," said Alma Cala, one of the organizers.

"This is to show that we're taking on the challenge of reclaiming the throne from them," she added.

"Of course it made me sad when I learned that the record was beat that's why we really want to take it back," said Ricky Bautista, 19, who helped set the kissing record for the Philippines back in 2004 with girlfriend Crystal Alberto.

Yesterday's "protesters" were couples who had taken part in previous kiss fests.

PSALM Power Sector Assets & Liabilities Management Corporation

POWER SECTOR ASSETS AND LIABILITIES MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
2nd Floor, SGV II Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

For the

SECURITY SERVICES FOR PSALM OFFICES IN MAKATI CITY AND QUEZON CITY

1. The PSALM, through its approved 2007 Corporate Operating Budget intends to apply the sum of **Three Million Six Hundred Thousand Pesos (Php 3,600,000.00)** being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the above project. Bids received that exceed the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The PSALM now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for **SECURITY SERVICES FOR PSALM OFFICES LOCATED AT THE 2nd FLOOR SGV II BUILDING or 7th Floor BANKMER BUILDING (as the case maybe), 3RD TO 6TH FLOOR BANKMER BUILDING, AYALA AVENUE, MAKATI CITY AND 3rd FLOOR, TRANSCO POWER TRAINING CENTER, DILIMAN, QUEZON CITY.** The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of R.A 9184, and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to R.A. 5183. Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents. ITB. The Bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the PSALM and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 9:00AM-5:00PM from Monday to Friday. Issuance of Bidding Documents shall start on January 25, 2007 from 9:00AM – 5:00PM Monday to Friday.
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of Four Thousand Pesos (P4,000.00), either in cash or check. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. The PSALM will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **February 02, 2007 at 4:00PM** at the 6F Bankmer Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before **February 14, 2007 11:00AM.** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of cash, certified check, cashier's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit, equivalent to one percent (1%) of the ABC Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be on **February 14, 2007 at 11:15AM** at the 6F Bankmer Building, Ayala Avenue, Makati City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend.
9. The PSALM reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders

Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management (PSALM) Corporation
Chairperson, Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)
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e-mail: *hctolentino@psalm.gov.ph*

(Sgd.) **HELENA C. TOLENTINO**
Chairperson, BAC

(PDI - Jan. 25, 2007)

Montalban …

From page A17

Cuerpo ordered his men to barricade the sanitary landfill by noon but Fernando quickly called a dialogue between the mayor and Rizal provincial officials in the evening.

Even though he agreed to reopen the facility, Cuerpo insisted that the landfill's daily operations remains under his control.

Samson earlier said that since November, the provincial government had been supervising the facility's operations.

Control

He added that they were forced to take over control of the landfill after Cuerpo refused to renew the contract of the private contractor operating the facility.

Another reason for the takeover, Samson said, was the need to implement a rehabilitation plan after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources found out that the facility was violating some environmental regulations.

"The provincial government can supervise the rehabilitation but we will still administer the daily operations," Cuerpo said. Tipping fees of P600 per ton of garbage should still be paid to the municipal government, he added.

Revenues

Sought for comment amid speculations that the tug-of-war was fueled by the huge revenues generated by the facility, Rizal Gov. Casimiro Ynares said the provincial government had never been interested in the fees.

"We approved that (sanitary landfill) four years ago without asking for any share (in the revenues)," he said.

"We just wanted to check on the environmental issues because our residents are affected," Ynares added.

Invalid

Cuerpo said the methane gas extraction project would also proceed even if the provincial board had already declared the agreement "invalid."

"We already brought the issue to Malacañang," he also said.

The facility remains the only viable destination for garbage generated by Metro Manila residents with the full implementation of Republic Act No. 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act set last year.

The act bans the use of open and controlled dumps.

Cuerpo had even said before that the facility was ready to accept more trash from the metropolis the moment other dumps are closed, only to be disappointed as the national government instead decided to extend the implementation of the law with the approach of the February 2006 deadline.

Opposition

The facility has long been opposed by environmental groups.

Bangon Kalikasan Movement head Joey Papa had said the area was part of Metro Manila's watershed.

The environment advocate said the facility was situated near a creek, which "was once a scenic, picnic site."

Papa also alleged that the facility was accepting unsegregated trash.

METROBRIEFS

Smoke scares mall visitors

AROUND 40 employees and customers of a store in SM Megamall panicked and ran when they saw smoke coming out of the ceiling yesterday afternoon. What they mistook for the start of a fire, however, turned out to be smoke caused by a short circuit in the electrical wiring of Watson's Pharmacy, located on the second floor, Building A, of SM Megamall in Mandaluyong. The smoke, however, spread throughout the building's second and third floors. "The smoke was absorbed by the air handling units (exhaust fans) installed inside the store, prompting it to spread that fast," SM head engineer Antolin Paule told the INQUIRER. Mandaluyong fire marshalls said that they received a call for help at 1:53 p.m. yesterday, prompting them to send two fire trucks and investigators to the mall. The building was cleared of smoke minutes later. No one was reported hurt in the incident and adjacent stores were not affected. "There was no actual damage done except for the opportunity of sales lost today and the ceiling that was torn down," a mall representative said.

Emman Cena

Miss SMHS '07 search on

THE SUMULONG School System (Sumulong Memorial High School in Antipolo City, Juan Sumulong Memorial Junior College in Taytay and Angono Private High School in Angono) will celebrates its 50th founding anniversary with two major activities: The search for Miss SMHS '07 will be held on Jan. 26 at the Ynares Center, Antipolo City. A grand alumni homecoming is set on Feb. 3. Those competing for the title are Prisca Victoria Pablo, Oshin Simeon, Ericka Camille Leyble, Rosh Nalog, Jhanniel Pedracio, Nyka Louise Ortiz, Kyala Marie Talusan, Shermaine Casandra Bandilla, Ericka Monique Sun, Ronalyn Quetva, Gazelle May Geronimo, Kenneth Joy Cariño, Dana Iris Carla Dayao, Cristina Bacaro, April Marie Sangalang, Jackie Maureen Rose Villegas and Andrea Mae de Guzman. The beauty contest will be hosted by TV personality Hans Montenegro. Judges will include celebrities and beauty title holders. For inquiries, please contact SMHS registrar Epifania Bernardo at 697-0312.

Don Bosco High Batch '82 reunion

HIGH school batch '82 of Don Bosco Mandaluyong will host this year's grand alumni homecoming dubbed "Uwian Na" on Jan. 27 at the school grounds. Menchu Antigua, former Miss Philippines-Earth 1st Runner-up and FHM model, will kick off the grand show which will also showcase live bands and dance performances. Opening the homecoming will be a Mass at 5:30 p.m. which will be celebrated by Fr. Michael F. La Guardia, a member of the sponsoring batch. All Don Bosco Mandaluyong alumni are invited to attend the homecoming. Batch '82 members may contact Ombet Traspe at 0918-9340440 or visit clickthecity.com/uwianna for more details.

DID YOU KNOW

EULOGIO "Amang" Rodriguez—after whom a medical center in Marikina City and a science and technology institute in Sta. Mesa, Manila were named—was the country's Senate president from 1953 to 1963. Before being elected to the Senate, he served as the municipal president of Montalban (now Rodriguez), Rizal and mayor of Manila. He also became congressman of Nueva Vizcaya and the second district of Rizal and secretary of agriculture and commerce. He was born in Montalban on Jan. 21, 1883 and died on Dec. 19, 1964.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

North Korea hints at flexibility in nuke talks

BEIJING—NORTH KOREA HINTed at flexibility in its position on six-party talks on Tuesday, raising hopes that a new round of negotiations aimed at dismantling its nuclear weapons program could make headway.

The North's chief negotiator, Kim Kye-gwan, was speaking in Beijing where he met his Chinese counterpart, Wu Dawei, and South Korean envoy Chun Yung-woo in a flurry of diplomacy surrounding the nuclear talks.

"Everything can change," Kim told reporters after meeting Chun, when asked if there had been any change in the North's position. He did not elaborate.

A round of the talks, which group the two Koreas, China, the United States, Japan and Russia, ended inconclusively in December, but three days of meetings in Berlin last week between Kim and Washington's envoy, Christopher Hill, have raised prospects for a breakthrough.

Chun said Kim had been positive about what North Korea viewed as a change in the US approach following the Berlin talks.

"We confirmed the possibility for progress in the next round of North Korea nuclear talks," the South Korean envoy told reporters after arriving in Seoul from Beijing.

Asked if talks could resume by Feb. 5, he said: "Talks will resume at least by then ... China will announce dates within the next two to three days." A date for another session of negotiations, which have continued on and off since 2003, was expected to be announced soon.

"We and the North agreed on resuming (the talks) in a few days, but the positions of the other countries involved need to be checked so there is no confirmation yet," South Korea's Yonhap news agency quoted Chun as saying.

"China will announce the schedule in a few days." Diplomatic efforts to convince North Korea to scrap its atomic program have taken on new urgency since Pyongyang defied international warnings and conducted its first nuclear test in October, triggering UN sanctions.

China said the next round of talks should take steps to implement an agreement reached in September 2005, in which North Korea agreed in principle to abandon its nuclear arms in exchange for aid and security guarantees from the other parties.

"We should also discuss the setting up and perfecting of a mechanism to carry out the statement and a general timetable should be drafted to ensure its implementation," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Liu Jianchao told a regular news conference.

"All parties concerned are making efforts to resume talks and bring about the positive implementation of the joint statement on Sept. 19," Liu said.

The ministry said later on its website that Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing had "exchanged views" with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on the issue by telephone late on Tuesday Beijing time. It gave no further details.

Progress at the six-party talks has been impeded by North Korea's insistence that Washington lift financial restrictions against it and release $24 million of its funds frozen at Macau's Banco Delta Asia.

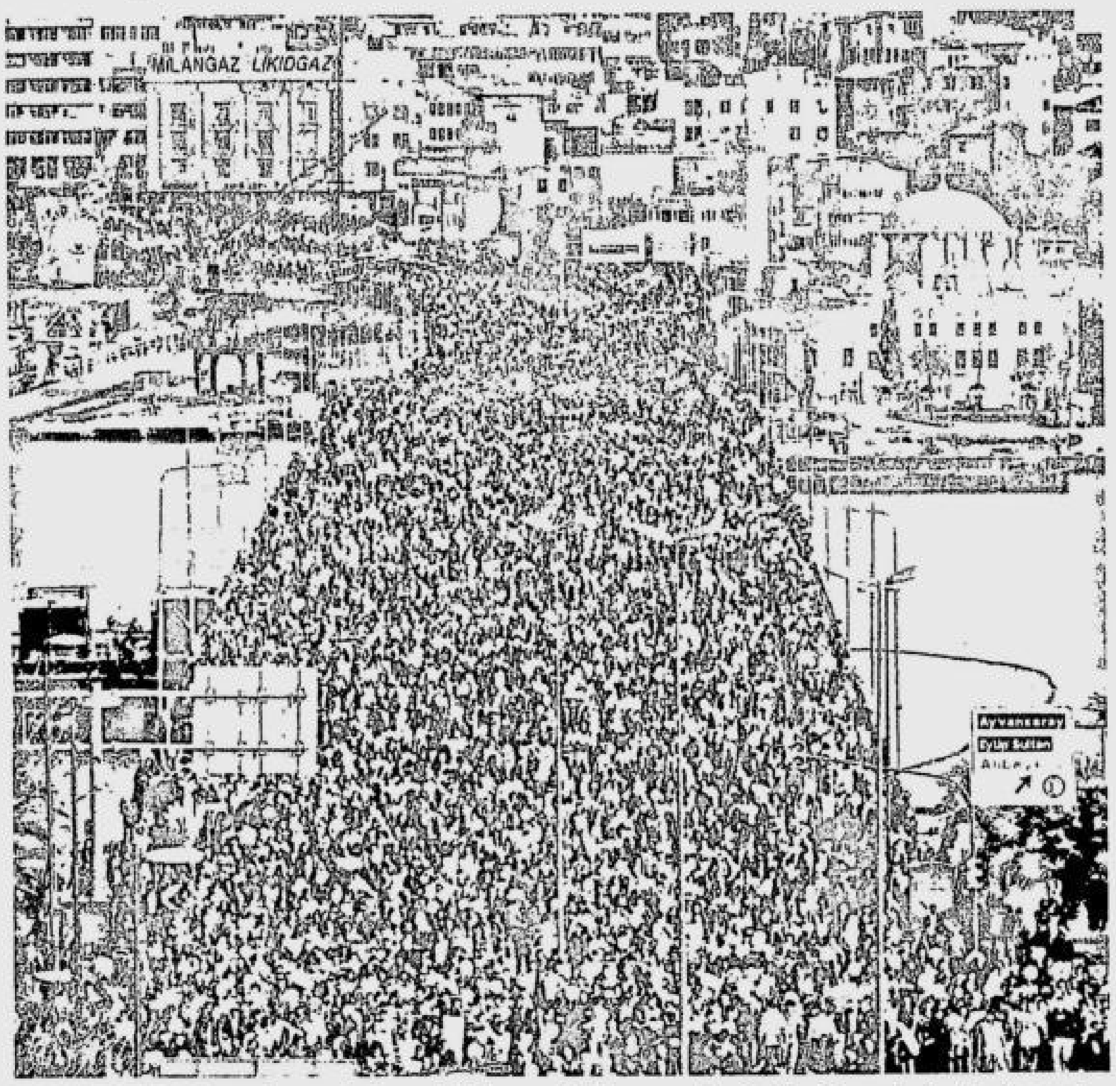
Washington designated the bank a "money-laundering concern," calling it a "willing pawn" in the North's illicit financial activities.

Chun said a second round of parallel financial talks between North Korean officials and the US Treasury Department could also convene soon.

"I believe the meeting will start in Beijing before the six-way talks resume," Yonhap quoted him as saying.

Japan's chief negotiator, Kenichiro Sasae, is expected to arrive in Beijing on Wednesday and South Korean Foreign Minister Song Min-soon visits from Thursday, continuing diplomatic efforts on North Korea's nuclear program. *Reuters*

Thousands at funeral of slain journalist



THOUSANDS of people march through Unkapani bridge over the Golden Horn during the funeral procession of Turkish-Armenian editor Hrant Dink in Istanbul, Jan. 23. REUTERS

ISTANBUL—MORE THAN 100,000 people attended the funeral Tuesday of slain ethnic Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, which was marked by calls for reconciliation between the Armenian and Turkish communities.

In one of the largest recent gatherings in Istanbul, the crowd gathered outside the office of Dink who was hated by nationalists for his outspoken views on the 1915-1917 Armenian massacres.

The 52-year-old journalist was shot dead outside the offices of the Agos weekly where Dink was shot dead by a lone gunman Friday.

"We are all Hrant Dink," "We are all Armenians, all of us," read placards written in Armenian on one side and Turkish on the other.

"Article 301 is the killer," read others, referring to a controversial clause of the Turkish penal code under which Dink was given a six-month suspended sentence last year for "insulting Turkishness." Dink was an outspoken critic of the official line on the World War I Ottoman Empire massacre of Armenians, which he labeled as genocide. He was branded a "traitor" by nationalists and had received threats.

But he was also widely respected in Turkey as a sincere activist for Turkish-Armenian reconciliation and free speech.

In an emotional eulogy, his wife Rakel, distraught and supported by relatives, said Dink was killed because of "his love of truth, transparency and friendship." "Neither darkness, nor fear, nor death will make us forget," she said.

Thousands of police were on duty for the ceremony and sharpshooters were positioned on the rooftops of nearby buildings. Authorities cancelled all police leave and called in reinforcements from nearby provinces.

Amid applause and cheers, the crowd marched from the newspaper to the church of the Armenian patriarchate for a religious service before burial at an Armenian cemetery.

Organizers estimated the number of participants at about 100,000 as the procession at times stretched over a distance of three kilometers.

"At a time when the word 'Armenian' is used as an insult in our country, it is a big step forward that people today are saying 'We are all Armenians'," another ethnic Armenian journalist, Raffi Hermonn, told AFP.

Turkish-Armenian Melisa Sivri, 16, said: "What Hrant could not do in his life he achieved with his death—and that is unity." At the church service for Dink, Patriarch Mesrob II, spiritual leader of Turkey's 80,000-strong Armenian community, appealed for "urgent" measures to eradicate anti-Armenian sentiment in the country.

"We still believe that our state and the Turkish people will accept the Armenians as citizens of the Turkish Republic ... who are neither strangers nor potential enemies," Patriarch Mesrob II said. *AFP*

Libby was set up to protect Rove, says lawyer at trial

LIBBY REUTERS

WASHINGTON—THE FORMER vice presidential aide charged with perjury was "set up" by the White House to protect political strategist Karl Rove during a CIA leak investigation, his lawyer said on Tuesday.

Lewis "Scooter" Libby was so worried he would be blamed for blowing the cover of a CIA operative that he asked his boss, Vice President Dick Cheney, to intervene on his behalf, defense lawyer Theodore Wells told the jury at the beginning of Libby's perjury trial.

"He was concerned about being set up," Wells said. "He was concerned about being the scapegoat for this entire Valerie Wilson controversy." Libby resigned as Cheney's chief of staff when he was charged with lying to investigators who sought to determine who leaked CIA operative Valerie Plame's identity. The leak occurred after Plame's husband, Joseph Wilson, accused the Bush administration of manipulating intelligence to build its case for invading Iraq.

Special Prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald said Libby told investigators he only passed along rumors about the operative, who was known by her maiden name Valerie Plame, to reporters.

But Libby had actually sought out information from other government officials and then shared that information with reporters as fact, Fitzgerald said.

"The defendant lied to the FBI and stole the truth from the grand jury," Fitzgerald said.

Wells said Libby couldn't possibly remember the details of conversations he had about Plame months after they happened because he was preoccupied with national security matters.

But Wells made clear he also intends to point a finger at the White House officials outside of Cheney's office, though Wells did not say who they were.

In his opening statement, Wells displayed a note written by Cheney that said he was "not going to protect one staffer (and) sacrifice the guy that was asked to stick his neck in the meat grinder because of the incompetence of others." Libby "was an important staffer, but Karl Rove was the lifeblood of the Republican Party," Wells said.

Cheney is among the prominent government officials and journalists expected to testify in the six-week case, which will examine the White House and the Washington press corps as the United States went to war in Iraq in 2003. *Reuters*

Ethiopian troops begin pullout from Mogadishu

MOGADISHU—ETHIOPIAN TROOPS ON Tuesday began pulling out of Mogadishu despite fears of a security vacuum in the still largely lawless Somali capital, nearly four weeks after they helped oust hardline Islamists.

Ethiopian and Somali officials who attended a send-off ceremony for around 200 soldiers hailed the move as a sign the situation was stabilizing in a country that has been the scene of near-endless bloodshed since 1991.

But amid the optimism, the specter of an Islamist insurgency raised its head as al-Qaida's number two called on fighters to "break the back" of the Ethiopians still remaining in the Horn of Africa nation.

After interim Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed held talks with officials in Addis Ababa, a senior Ethiopian official said the pullout showed "we are not forces of occupation." "We have always said that ... as soon as Somali forces are able to take care of their security, the Ethiopian forces would leave Somalia," he told AFP. "That time has now come."

His view was echoed by Somalia's Deputy Prime Minister Hussein Mohamed Aidid who said the opening of a Yemeni embassy in Mogadishu "shows the improved level of security."

But speaking in Nairobi, Somali Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi said Ethiopian troops would continue to have a presence until a proposed nearly 8,000-strong African Union stabilization force is in place.

Only two countries, however, Malawi and Uganda, have so far pledged to provide troops and Gedi said he would not allow a security vacuum to develop.

"If need be, Ethiopia will remain and this is a decision between the two governments," he told diplomats.

In a sign of the push to get more countries involved, Yusuf traveled from Addis Ababa to Rwanda which has also been asked to contribute troops.

Gedi and his transitional government had only been able to operate out of a provincial backwater until the Ethiopians intervened on their behalf in December, prompting the Islamists to flee Mogadishu.

The prime minister acknowledged his administration faced huge challenges, especially in disarming militias, and needed international funds.

"Disarming Somalia is not an easy task ... the government is doing its job with the limited resources we have," said Gedi.

Somali police, last on regular patrol in the city in 1991 before the demise of the dictator Mohamed Siad Barre, were meant to have begun patrols of Mogadishu on Tuesday, but there was no sign of them on the streets.

The capital, a battleground for rival warlords until the Islamists took power and established some degree of order last June, has again been the scene of deadly firefights this week.

Al-Qaida's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, said in a new video message that Islamist fighters would "break the back" of the Ethiopians who got "bogged down" by the United States in "a real disaster" in Somalia.

Washington, which backed Ethiopia's intervention in Somalia and then launched an airstrike at suspected al-Qaida operatives there, has welcomed the change of regime as a chance for Somalia to turn its back on violence.

While some members of the former Islamist regime have threatened guerrilla warfare against Mogadishu's new rulers, the US is hoping one of its top officials can help the reconciliation process.

The US embassy in Nairobi said ambassador Michael Ranneberger, whose brief includes Somalia, plans to meet an Islamist leader, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, this week after his weekend surrender to Kenyan authorities. *AFP*

WORLDBRIEFS

Hijacker seizes Sudan plane

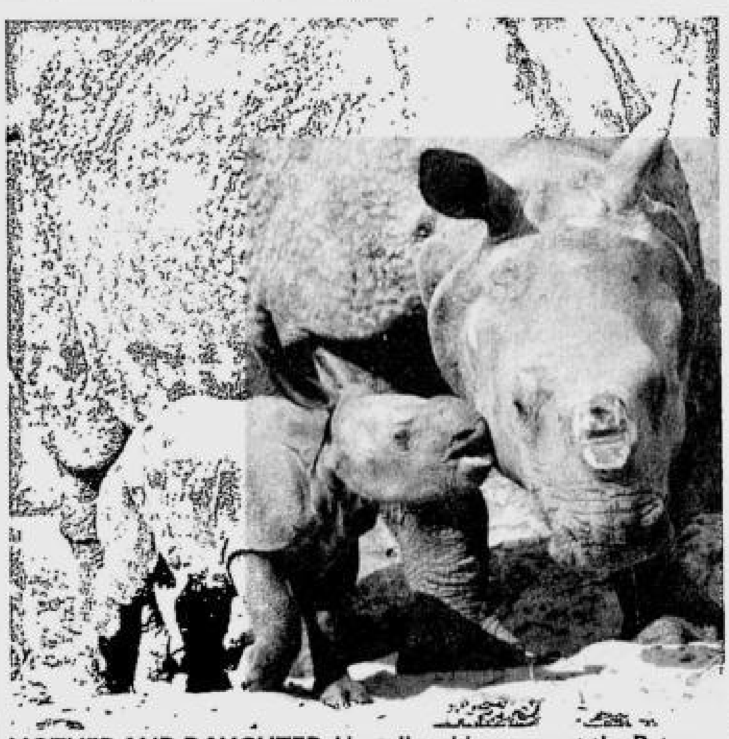
N'DJAMENA, CHAD—A hijacker seized a Sudanese Boeing 737 carrying 103 passengers and crew on Wednesday and forced the pilot to fly to the Chadian capital, N'Djamena, where he surrendered, officials said. Saif Omer, Air West airline's managing director, said the man walked out of the plane after it landed in Chad and said he wanted asylum in Britain. No one was injured, he said. The hijacker walked into the cockpit a half-hour after takeoff and put a pistol to the pilot's head, demanding to go to Chad, Omer said. *AP*

5 Americans killed in Iraq

BAGHDAD—A US security company helicopter crashed as it flew over a dangerous Sunni neighborhood in the central Baghdad where insurgents and Iraqi security troops fought a prolonged gunbattle, and a US official said five American civilians on board were killed. A senior Iraqi military official said Tuesday the aircraft was shot down, but this was disputed by a US military official in Washington. The Iraqi said the helicopter was hit by a machine gunner over the Fadhil neighborhood on the east side of the Tigris River, while the US official said there was no indication in initial reports that the aircraft, owned by Blackwater USA, had been shot down. Blackwater USA confirmed that five Americans employed by the North Carolina-based company as security professionals were killed. The statement from spokesperson Anne Tyrrell did not provide identities or any details of the fighting. *AP*

Suicide blast kills 10

KABUL—A suicide bomber mingled with a crowd of workers outside a Nato base in Afghanistan on Tuesday before setting off his explosives, killing 10 people, officials said. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the worst suicide attack in Afghanistan this year. In a separate incident, Taliban fighters killed eight policemen in an ambush, an official said. Most of those killed in the blast were laborers waiting at a checkpoint to enter the base in the southeastern province of Khost. "This was carried out by the enemies of our country," said provincial governor Arsala Jamal. He said 10 people had been killed in addition to the bomber and 14 wounded. A Nato spokesperson said no Nato troops had been hurt. *Reuters*



MOTHER AND DAUGHTER. Hartali, a rhinoceros at the Patna zoo, is seen with her new born baby in Patna, India, Jan. 24. AP

DNA evidence frees man after 22 years in prison

MIAMI—A MAN WHO SPENT almost 22 years in prison for a rape he did not commit was to be freed Tuesday in the US state of Georgia after his innocence was confirmed by DNA evidence, his attorneys said.

Pete Williams, 44, already knows what he will do when he leaves his jailhouse, his attorneys said: He will draw himself a hot bath.

Williams was sentenced to 45 years in prison in 1985 after being convicted on charges of raping and sodomizing a woman at gunpoint in an Atlanta neighborhood.

Before and after his arrest, four other rapes that followed the same pattern were reported in the same Atlanta neighborhood. Williams always maintained his innocence, but two victims identified him as the rapist.

Lawyers from the nonprofit Georgia Innocence Project, which conducts DNA tests for prisoners, had revealed last week that such evidence exonerated Williams.

Prosecutors in Fulton County, where Atlanta is located, said they now believe Williams is innocent. *AFP*

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

The WORLD

Deadly clashes mar Lebanon strike

BEIRUT—THREE PEOPLE WERE KILLED AND 133 wounded in factional fighting in Lebanon Tuesday as opposition protestors staged a nationwide strike, blocking roads with burning tires in the latest show of force aimed at ousting the Western-backed government.

Police said the protests erupted into violence as pro-government supporters fought street battles with followers of the opposition led by the pro-Syrian militant party Hezbollah.

Three people were killed in the northern port cities of Tripoli and Batroun, while 133 others were wounded in armed clashes, fistfights and stone-throwing in various areas of the country, brought to its knees by the one-day general strike.

The violence added to concerns over the stability of a country still bearing the scars of the 1975-1990 civil war and last summer's massive Israeli offensive against the Shiite Muslim fundamentalist Hezbollah.

Prime Minister Fuad Siniora warned that the government and the army will not be "lenient with any attempts to disrupt public order, civil peace and the respect of the law."

The embattled premier has pinned the blame on Iran and Syria for the Hezbollah-backed strike.

"The strike was transformed into acts and incitements which exceeded all limits and reminded of the era of discord, war and tutelage," he said, referring to the 29-year Syrian military domination of the country until 2005.

After a day of widespead violence, the demonstrations eased by nightfall and the army began clearing blocked roads across the country.

Late Tuesday night, the opposition said it was ending the action.

"The opposition has decided to suspend the strike which served as a warning to the illegitimate government" of Siniora, it said in a statement broadcast on local television stations.

Calm returned to Lebanon as roads were cleared and Beirut airport reopened Wednesday after the opposition called off the strike.

Many shops also reopened, although some businesses opted to wait until noon before raising their iron-curtains to make sure the situation had returned to normal.

The state-run Lebanese University and many school remained shut across the country.

During the day, troops and police were out in force for the action which was denounced by the government as a "coup attempt" by the opposition movement spearheaded by Hezbollah.

Thick clouds of smoke billowed over the capital and other cities as demonstrators blocked roads by burning tires and old cars, and spreading sand and rubble.

Militants also cut road access to Beirut airport in an escalation of the protest that has crippled the Siniora administration for weeks.

A source at Beirut international airport told AFP that 34 flights had been canceled while many arriving passengers were stranded at the airport due to the road into the city being blocked.

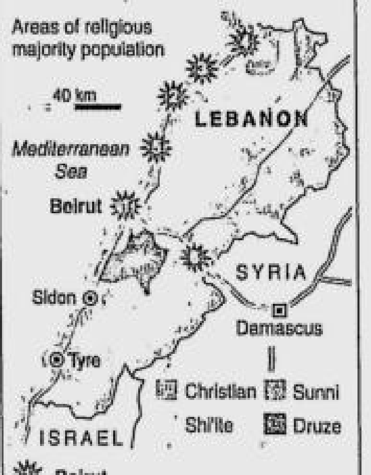
The United States accused Syrian-backed factions in Lebanon of trying to impose their will by violence and intimidation.

"The United States is deeply concerned about developments today in Lebanon," department of state spokesperson Sean McCormack said in a statement.

"Lebanese factions allied with Syria are blocking roads, preventing people from reaching their jobs and schools, and obstructing the work of the security services." "These factions are trying to use violence, threats, and intimidation to impose their political will on Lebanon." The strike was the first major escalation by the opposition since its supporters began a sit-in outside government offices in Beirut last Dec. 1. *AFP*

LEBANON STRIKE

Three people were killed and 133 injured in clashes between government loyalists and protesters bent on toppling Lebanon's cabinet on Tuesday, police said



- ✹ **Beirut**
  - Roads to airport and port blocked
  - Soldiers fire into the air to keep stone-throwing crowds apart
  - Most main roads and highways shut
  - Many shops, schools and businesses closed
- ✹ **Batroun** A Lebanon government supporter shot dead
- ✹ **Tripoli** Two people shot dead
- ✹ **Halba** Six people injured in gunfight
- ✹ **Byblos** Three protesters wounded by gunman
- ✹ **Sofar** Opposition party member shot

Source. Lebanese media REUTERS

Bush seeks 20% cuts in gasoline use

WASHINGTON—US PRESIDENT George W. Bush will call Tuesday for a 20 percent cut in gasoline use over 10 years and curbs on dangerous emissions, in a State of the Union address aimed at rescuing his presidency from the tumult of the Iraq war.

Under fire from rival Democrats and even fellow Republicans, Bush will lay out a plethora of domestic policy programs, striving to escape the shadow of a conflict which has killed more than 3,000 US soldiers and threatens his legacy.

Bush's primetime televised address, set for 9 p.m., will take place with his poll numbers mired at all-time lows and US forces in Iraq facing some of the worst violence since the March 2003 invasion.

Delivering the speech to a Democratic-controlled Congress for the first time in his six years in office, Bush will call for a doubling of America's emergency oil reserves by 2027 and urge approval of comprehensive immigration reform, according to a White House fact sheet.

Bush, whom critics worldwide accuse of neglecting climate change, hopes to halt the growth in carbon-dioxide emissions from automobiles, light trucks and sport-utility vehicles by 2017, said his deputy chief of staff, Joel Kaplan.

"The president is going to propose a bold, ambitious, but achievable goal of reducing by 20 percent our gasoline usage by 2017," Kaplan told reporters in a briefing on the high-stakes political speech.

Bush will urge the Congress to give him powers to change automotive fuel economy standards and take steps to stimulate the production and consumption of renewable and alternative fuels, said Kaplan. *AFP*

Israeli president faces indictment for rape

JERUSALEM—ISRAELI PRESIdent Moshe Katsav faced widespread calls to resign Wednesday after the attorney general announced he would indict him for rape and other charges, the most serious allegations ever leveled against an Israeli leader.

"Resign," read a banner headline in the mass-selling Yediot Aharonot daily, echoing calls in other media and across the political spectrum for the president to step down from his largely ceremonial post.

Katsav was due to hold a press conference later on Wednesday, a day after Attorney General Menahem Mazuz said he intended to indict the 61-year-old married father of five with rape, sexual harassment, breach of trust and accepting bribes.

"After examining all the available evidence, the attorney general has reached the conclusion that there is sufficient alleged evidence to file an indictment against the president," the justice ministry said on Tuesday.

A final decision on the indictment will be made only after a hearing, where Katsav will be allowed to present his case.

Katsav has denied the charges and vowed to fight the allegations. He has steadfastly refused to step down during the months of investigation against him, saying he was the victim of a "witch-hunt." But Israeli media, politicians and the public were nearly unanimous in their opinion that Katsav should go.

"Someone should explain to the honored president that he should go home," wrote the second-largest daily, Maariv. "Release his grasp on the trappings of power, pack his bags and take his leave of the president's residence in Jerusalem as quickly as possible." "He should resign as he has no right to leave us in this situation," Yossi Beilin, chief of the left-leaning Meretz party, told public radio. "As a society, we have the right to tell him that he is no longer our president and that his portrait can no longer be hung in schools." Said Guidon Saar of the right-wing Likud opposition party in parliament said: "The president must resign. Period. And I hope that he will take such a decision within the upcoming hours. If not, the ball will be in Knesset's court, which should fire him."

Meanwhile a poll published in Yediot showed that a staggering 79 percent of Israelis had little or no confidence in the Iranian-born Katsav, who was elected by MPs in the Knesset to his post in 2000. *AFP*

KATSAV AFP

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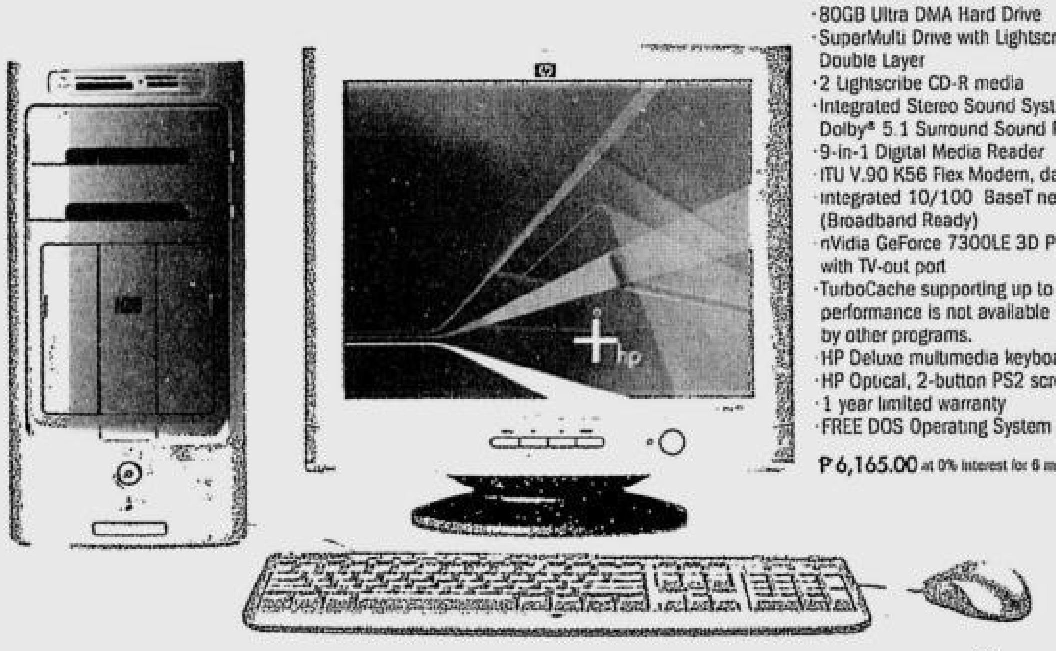

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Ex-VP Al Gore 'thrilled' by Oscar nominations

NEW YORK—FORMER VICE President Al Gore may fare better when the Oscar ballots are counted than he did in the disputed 2000 presidential election when he lost to George W. Bush by several hundred votes in the pivotal Florida recount.

"An Inconvenient Truth," Gore's film on the perils of global warming, scored two Oscar nominations Tuesday—for best documentary feature and best original song.

While he is not technically a nominee—the film's director, Davis Guggenheim, won the nod, as did singer Melissa Etheridge for the song "I Need to Wake Up"—Gore said he was "thrilled" that his movie was honored.

"The film ...has brought awareness of the climate crisis to people in the United States and all over the world," Gore said in an e-mail statement. "I am so grateful to the entire team and pleased that the Academy has recognized their work. This film proves that movies really can make a difference."

Aides say the former vice president plans to walk the red carpet with Hollywood's beautiful people at the Academy Awards ceremony next month.

Guggenheim said he was not expecting a nomination but welcomed the fresh attention. He said he asked Gore, "'Are you ready to go to the show?' I think he's ready. For years he's been in the wilderness on global warming. Now he's ready for his grand walk. Now he's at the Academy Awards. It's a hero's return."

"An Inconvenient Truth," which chronicles Gore's slide show on global warming, has been a critical and box office success, bringing in more than $24 million to make it the third highest-grossing documentary in history. A companion book has been on national best-seller lists for months. *AP*

GORE REUTERS

PBA and NBA stories on A16.

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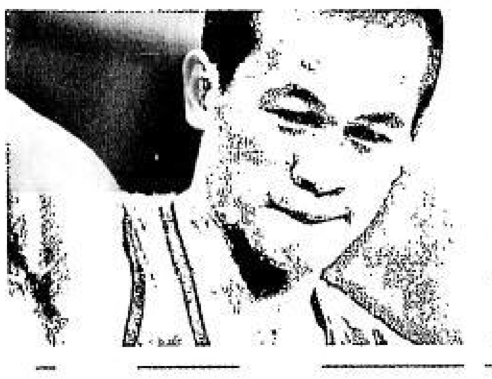
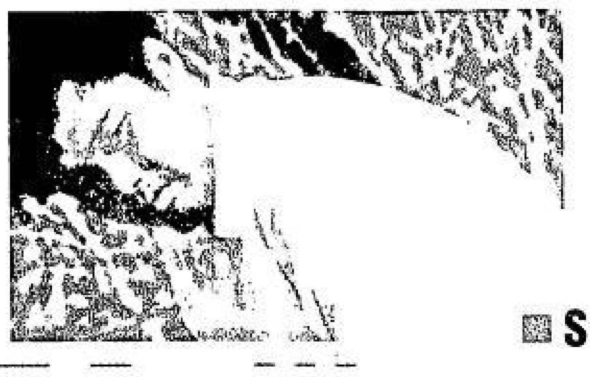


WHAT'S INSIDE

Life takes a golden turn for driven Joan Tipon /A22



Murakami leads 20 'rabbits' to RP Open /A23

Sharapova, Clijsters struggle to advance /A24

SBP close to getting Fiba nod

COACH Chot Reyes (left) with members of the national training pool just before the PBA halted their training last year. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

By June Navarro

DETERMINED TO BRING THE NATIONAL DRIBBLERS swiftly back to the international arena, the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas said yesterday that it is close to completing the requirements for the lifting of the country's suspension by the international basketball federation, Fiba.

PBA commissioner Noli Eala, the SBP's designated spokesperson, said the Unity Congress to be held on Feb. 5 and the formation of a national team for the Southeast Asian Basketball Association championships will be the final ingredients in the unification process.

Eala called on all the major stakeholders of the sport from the Basketball Association of the Philippines and Pilipinas Basketball to attend the congress at the Dusit Hotel in Makati City.

"I hope this (congress) will end the impasse and pave the way for the national team to see action on the international front," he said.

"There will be many surprises in the Unity Congress."

According to Eala, the atmosphere in the assembly would be similar to that of a stockholders' meeting where a roll call of the membership would precede the election of officers by acclamation.

"The congress will be inclusionary rather than exclusionary," he explained. "Everybody (BAP and PB members) is invited."

Business tycoon Manny V. Pangilinan is expected to be formally named as president of the SBP in the congress while Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, who was replaced by Christian Tan as BAP head recently, will sit as chair. *(See related story below.)*

"We feel that we have almost completed the requirements except for the congress and the national team," Eala said. "I will sit down with (national coach) Chot Reyes to discuss the matter in the soonest possible time."

The commissioner added that Fiba officials, led by secretary general Patrick Baumann and president Bob Elphinston, had asked the SBP delegation which went to the Fiba headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, to present its program for the RP team.

"The Fiba has told us that in no uncertain terms, that our sanctuary is the Tokyo communique," said Eala. "As long as we stay in the bounds and complete the mandate of the accord, we could never go wrong."

There's a flaw in unity process—BAP

By June Navarro

THE BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION of the Philippines believes that there's a crucial flaw in the unification process that Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas officials had overlooked.

And with the SBP missing the important detail, deliberately or otherwise, the process of fully completing the terms of the joint communiqué between the BAP and Pilipinas Basketball won't be achieved, according to BAP acting president Christian Tan yesterday.

TAN

Tan said the oversight came when the SBP, which was empowered by the International Basketball Federation (Fiba) to solve the leadership crisis in the sport, named the 25-man board composed of businessman Manny V. Pangilinan and 12 members each from the BAP and Pilipinas Basketball.

Under the joint communique endorsed by the Fiba in Tokyo last year, Tan said the 25-man board should be elected by the "unity congress" composed of the entire membership of the BAP and the PB.

"By unity congress, it means that all the member organizations are entitled to vote," said Tan. "What the SBP did was appoint the interim officials by themselves and exclude the voting members.

"We're definitely not against unity. But if we are to fix the problem, we better fix it in a right manner and not make half-baked decisions and procedures."

Tan temporarily replaced Sen. Jinggoy Estrada who was sacked recently as BAP head.

Tan claimed that the BAP still has 66 members under its wings while the PB has 21 member organizations.

The SBP installed Pangilinan as president and Estrada as chair.

PBA commissioner Noli Eala, recently designated as SBP spokesman, announced the other day that the appointed SBP officials would be elected by acclamation during the Unity Congress set Feb. 5 at the Dusit Hotel in Makati.

"It's all just for show," said Tan. "Why elect your officers by acclamation when you could do the elections the proper way in the unity congress."

"The correct process is to let the congress decide who will stand as officials in the new organization," added Tan. "If they do that, the name of the new organization wouldn't matter anymore."

According to Tan, the BAP had already notified the Fiba about the latest development and pointed out the flaw in the procedure.

"We've been following the communiqué to the letter," he said. "They (SBP officials) are the ones who refuse to follow it properly."

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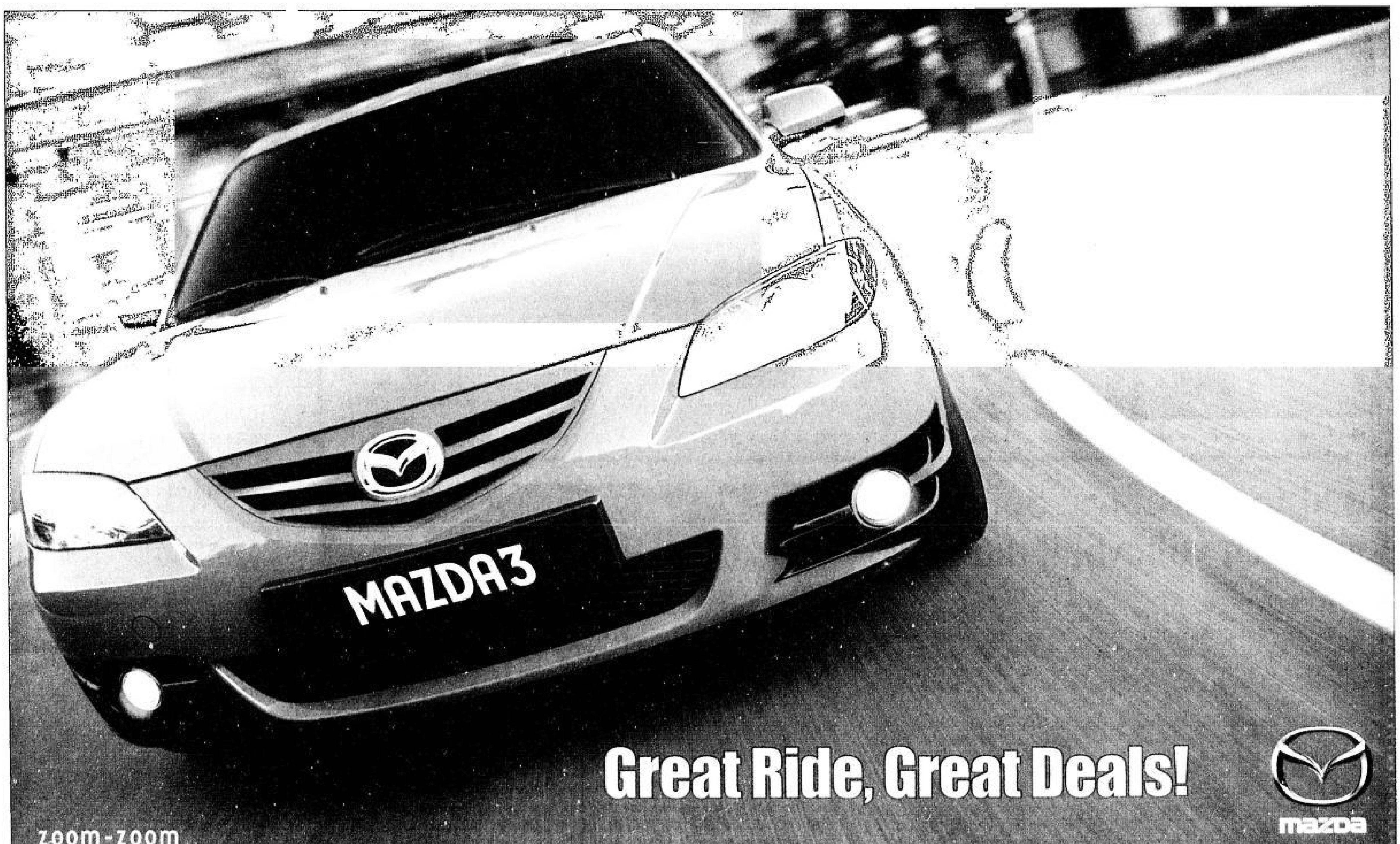


Visit the Mazda booth on Earth Drive Day at the Fort Open Grounds behind the NBC tent on Saturday, Jan. 27, from 9AM to 7PM. Test Drive a Mazda and avail of special offers only on Earth Drive Day.

Bautista faces tough Colombian Feb. 24

By Salven L. Lagumbay, *Contributor*

CEBU CITY—UNDEFEATED FILIPINO BOXING sensation Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista faces his toughest test on Feb. 24 when he fights tough Colombian Feider Viloria in a 12-round battle for the vacant WBO Intercontinental and WBO Youth super bantamweight titles.

The Bautista-Viloria clash will be the co-feature of the huge "Moment of Truth" card at the Cebu City Sports Complex being put up by Golden Boy Promotions, ALA Boxing Gym and Sammy Gello-ani's SGG Sports Promotions.

The other attraction features Fernando Montiel's defense of his WBO super flyweight crown against Filipino Z Gorres.

Television network ABS-CBN will cover the fights, according to Gello-ani during a press conference yesterday.

The 23-year-old Viloria is expected to provide the kind of test that fans have been clamoring for the hugely popular Bautista.

The Antioquia, Colombia, native has a menacing record of 18 wins, 1 loss, 1 draw with 12 KOs. He holds the WBC Latino super bantamweight title.

Viloria, tapped over four other candidates to face Bautista owing to his credentials and his willingness to travel to the Philippines, is ranked WBC No. 14, WBO No. 14 and WBA No. 12 among the world's super bantams.

International matchmaker Sampson Lewkowicz and GBP vice president Eric Gomez were responsible in getting Bautista's foe, as well as the opponents for Alex John Banal and Jimrex Jaca, who will be seeing action in the undercard.

Villa Anita-Quezon joins NBC

VILLA ANITA-QUEZON WANTS TO ENJOY that winning feeling in the National Basketball Conference again.

Elated by its victory in the NBC International Invitational Cup last November, Villa Anita-Quezon has decided to join the community-based league as a regular member.

The Quezon province team of Gov. Wilfredo Enverga and his son Mark sealed their team's entry in a recent meeting with NBC president Nathaniel "Tac" Padilla and secretary general Tito Palma at the Manila Peninsula Hotel in Makati City.

Quezon manager Freddie Militsala and coach Angel Vergeire were also present.

Villa Anita-Quezon swept Eastern Antelopes-Taiwan, Montaña Pawnshop-Davao and Garuda Panasia-Indonesia en route to the NBC International Invitational Cup title.

"After a successful stint in the international tournament, we are looking forward to a successful debut in the regular conference," said Enverga.

The father-and-son tandem will host NBC's fourth season opening on March 10 at the Quezon Convention Center. They vowed to surpass the successful hosting of the league's first international event.

2 more PBL Silver Cup tiffs set today

AFTER THE TWO PLAYOFFS FOR SEMIFINAL berths come two more playoffs today for quarterfinal slots in the 2007 PBL Silver Cup at the Emilio Aguinaldo College gym in Manila.

Henkel Sista-St. Benilde takes on Magnolia Ice Cream at 4 p.m. after the TeleTech-Cebuana Lhuillier Pera Padala contest at 2 o'clock.

Although they split their two games in the classification round, Henkel Sista enjoys a slight edge over Magnolia with a 6-4 win-loss record that is the best among the four quarterfinal bidders.

The Spinners also left much to be desired after they were forced to go through three overtimes before beating the Kettle Korn Pop Kings last week to earn a crack at the Super Sealers.

Odds are even in the opener after both TeleTech and Pera Padala wound up with similar 4-6 slates.

The winner of the Henkel Sista-Magnolia moves up against Mail and More in the quarterfinals with the survivor of the TeleTech-Pera Padala clash advancing against Harbour Centre.

But the road is tougher in the quarterfinals for today's victors since Mail and More and Harbour are waiting for them with twice-to-beat advantages.

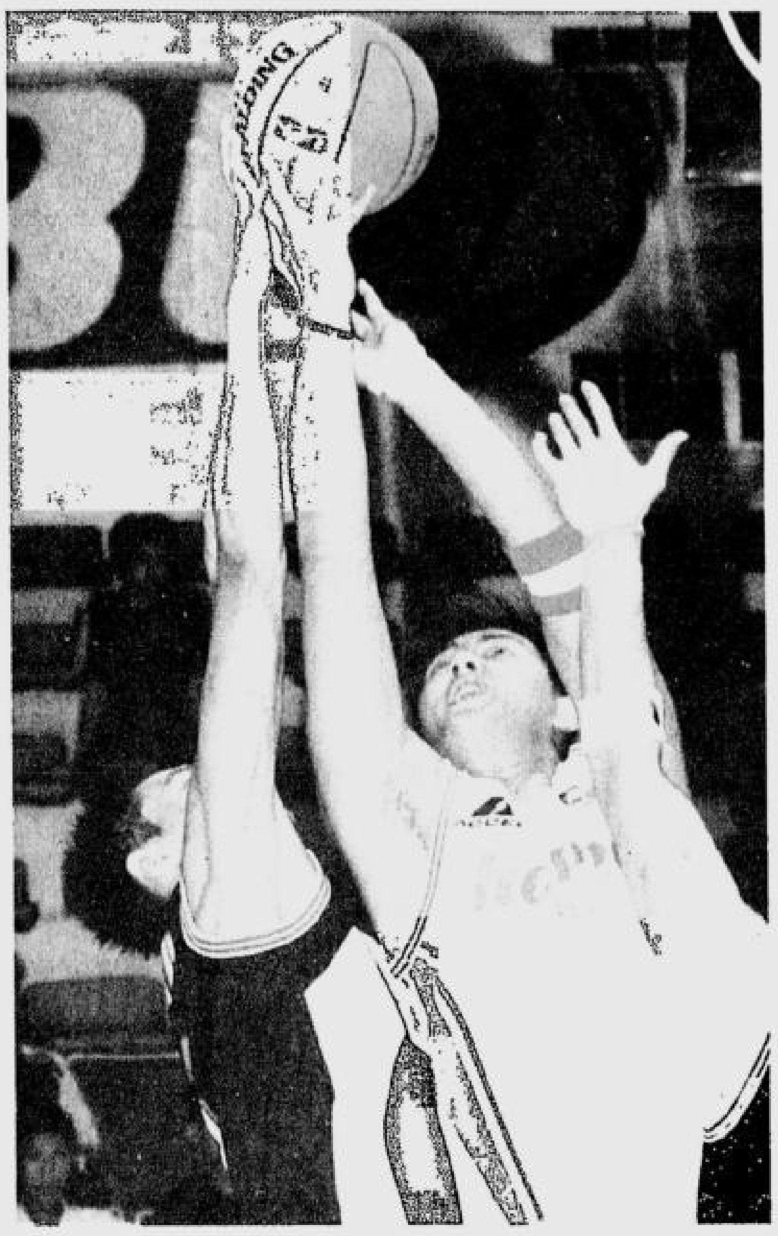
Already in the semifinals are Hapee-PCU and Toyota Otis following their wins over Mail and More and Harbour, respectively, in their playoff duels Wednesday.

Bonbon Custodio, who scattered 34 points against Kettle Korn, is expected to lead Magnolia along with 6-foot-8 Nigerian Samuel Ekwe. But the Super Sealers have Marcy Arellano and 6-9 Samigue Eman to match Magnolia's key men.

Henkel beat Magnolia in the opener last Nov. 11 but the Spinners bounced back with a 68-49 win over the Super Sealers last week.

Marc Anthony Reyes

GAMES TODAY
(Emilio Aguinaldo College Gym)
2 p.m.—TeleTech vs Cebuana Lhuillier-Pera Padala
4 p.m.—Henkel Sista vs Magnolia



HAPEE'S Beau Belga shoots off Mail and More's Elmer Espiritu during their game Tuesday. The Teeth Masters won, 91-80. ERIK ARAZAS

Is Pacquiao running for GenSan mayor?

IN HUDDLE

Beth Celis

TEMPORARILY pushing aside the subject of boxing, to which he has been closely identified with lately, Reli de Leon of Manny Pacquiao Promotions has shifted his interest to a new passion.

I bet you'll never guess the sport he's currently in love with, considering that the Philippines is only a two-season country.

Would you believe, ice skating?

* * *

Reli said he is excited about this sport because our tropical country has produced world-caliber ice skaters. Strangely.

"Do you know that while we're looking at boxing, taekwondo and wushu as the potential source of our first-ever Olympic gold medal, there's every possibility that it could come from ice skating," he said, not meaning to shock me.

I just listened because I was in no position to refute. He is familiar with the members of the Philippine ice skating team, but I'm not sure if he has seen them in an international competition.

* * *

Since I was not about to just take his word for it, Reli suggested that, maybe, I should see for myself how ice skaters perform before they leave for China to participate in the Asian Winter Games.

This is the first time the country is competing in a professional event, he said.

"We're sending the best, a team of five, two of them Fil-Americans."

I guess we will find out how good they are very soon. And then maybe we can start visualizing with him that Olympic gold.

* * *

I had about three dozen questions to ask Reli about Pacquiao, but we couldn't talk that long on the phone because he was in a meeting and wouldn't be free until late in the afternoon for a lengthy chat.

To start with, I wanted to check with him unconfirmed reports about the Filipino boxing icon's political plans.

Was Pacquiao really seeking the mayoral seat of his hometown GenSan?

What about talk that he was running as vice mayor of Manila in tandem with Ali Atienza, son of Mayor Lito Atienza.

A colleague, who is considered a boxing expert, said he couldn't believe that Pacman would run against his No. 1 fan and supporter in GenSan, Pedro Acharon, who always cheered for him in the United States.

"Manny's close friend, the mayor, is running for his third and last term," my colleague said. "He has done everything for Manny. Could Manny be really running against him? He is a registered voter in Manila. Boxing, like politics, has become dirty."

My colleague is inclined to believe that Manny would run against his friend. One indication, he said, is that he has purchased and secured licenses for 20 guns which he said, could arm a private army.

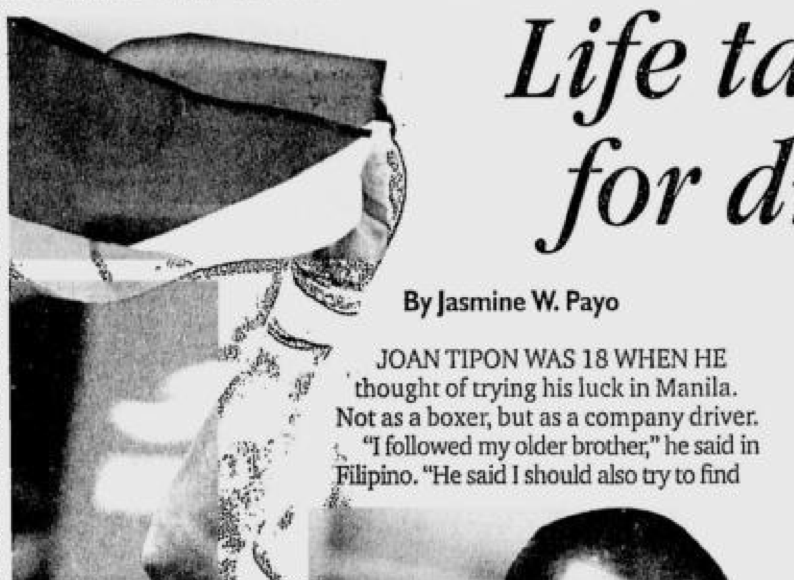
* * *

It's a boy for Kris and James, according to the ultrasound machine, and the little fellow is expected to be delivered by the stork between May 6 and 10.

Kris looked unquestionably pregnant when we saw her at the PSA Awards last week where hubby James was presented with the best pro player award.

"His name is James Carlos Yap Jr.," Kris said. "His nickname is Baby James because from the time my tummy grew, that's what Josh (Kris' son) called him."

Life takes a golden turn for driven Joan Tipon



JOAN Tipon says his name "helped" him get started in boxing. AFP

By Jasmine W. Payo

JOAN TIPON WAS 18 WHEN HE thought of trying his luck in Manila. Not as a boxer, but as a company driver.

"I followed my older brother," he said in Filipino. "He said I should also try to find work as a driver. We had a hard life and we wanted to help our family."

It was a decision he grudgingly made. If Tipon had a choice, he would search for his own piece of the sky inside the boxing ring where, in his native Bacolod City, he had started to make a name for himself.

Boxing was something Tipon learned to love at an early age. If you carry a girl's name and get teased about your sexuality, you tend to defend your manhood the macho way.

"I got teased a lot when I was young because of my name, *sabi nila bakla ako* (they said I was gay)," he said. His name was a combination of the names of his grandparents, Jose and Annalisa. "I got into fights, then I started learning boxing with my friends."

But as passionate as he was about boxing, pragmatism won him over. In a land where everybody wants to be the next Manny Pacquiao or Onyok Velasco, Tipon wasn't really sure how he would work his way up the upper ranks of the sport.

"I'm the only one into boxing in my family," he said. "I was winning gold medals in city and barangay matches, but that was it."

As the sixth of seven children, Tipon said his family had a tough time making ends meet. His father Vicente worked in a sugar mill, while his mother Fe helped augment the family income as a fish vendor.

"After I graduated from high school, my parents suggested that I try helping out our family," the 24-year-old said.

Two months in Manila, though, didn't bring much luck to the promising bantamweight fighter. As driven as he was to support his relatives back home, he couldn't find a driver's job.

Learning that his ward had remained idle, an old mentor coaxed Tipon out of hibernation and encouraged him to try his luck in the 2000 National Open at the Rizal Coliseum.

His performance—he won the bantamweight gold—turned heads.

"That's when the national coaches saw me," he said.

Suddenly, Tipon was contributing to the family income doing the one thing he loved the most. And he also enjoyed a perk that came with being a national athlete: The chance to represent the country abroad.

Tipon won a silver in the 2003 Southeast Asian Games and then punched his way to the gold in the 2005 edition of the meet.

All his hard work paid off when he bagged the gold in the 2006 Asiad in Doha, Qatar.

"I wasn't too nervous then," he said of his Asiad stint. "I was confident because of the training and experience I had."

With the win, Tipon joined the elite club of Negros boxers that include Olympic silver medalist Velasco and 1994 Asian Games champions Reynaldo Galido and Elias Recaido—who brought glory to the country in the international scene.

It was a long road to that Asiad gold. But for someone who started out thinking he'd end up simply driving trucks, the journey was all worth it.

Road to Olympics: Solid start for beach volleyball darlings

By Marc Anthony Reyes

FIL-AMERICANS HEIDI ILUSTRE AND DIANE Pascua won two legs of the New Zealand beach volleyball tour recently in a big kickoff to their bid to qualify for the 2008 Beijing Olympics

The tandem, winner of the bronze medal in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games and quarterfinalists in the 15th Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, ruled the third and fourth legs held at the Whakatome Ohope on Jan. 10-11 and Maunganui Tauranga on Jan. 13-14, respectively.

They also placed second in the opening leg on Jan. 2-3 in Matarangi, Coromandel Peninsula, third place in the second leg on Jan. 6-7 in Oriental Beach, Wellington, and fourth place in the fifth and last leg only last Monday in Auckland.

But the two earned no Olympic qualifying points as the FIVB World Beach Volleyball Tour only formally starts in May in Shanghai, according to Philippine Volleyball Federation secretary general Otie Camangian.

Just the same, the PVF official said it "was a good start" for Ilustre and Pascua, who are competing around the world at their own expense.

"Exposure-wise, it was surely a lot of help for the girls," said Camangian, who hopes to get the pair to vie in at at least eight of the 18-leg World Tour.

The standings in the World Tour will be used to determine the pairs that will play in the Beijing Olympics next year, according to Camangian.

PRESIDENT'S CUP POLO: Iñigo Zobel of the Whites (center) makes a clean getaway from the Blues' Bobby Aguirre (right) as teammate Jun Juban looks on during the recent President's Cup at the Alabang Country Club. The Whites prevailed, 10-8, in the match sponsored by Basement Salon and Belle Corp. Other members of the Whites were Anthony Filamor and Hero Suzuki. Aside from Aguirre, Dino Santos, Santi Elizalde and Manot Montilla vied for the Blues. In the low-goal match, the Greens of Chelsi Yabut, Cole and Gusi Aguirre and Alfie Araneta beat the Reds of Jun Eusebio, Sonny Borromeo, Jerome Hernandez and Jack Clark. ERIK ARAZAS

RACING TIPS

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Tri)—Joy Sutter (2), Lucky Joe (4), Hakuna Matata (3)
Race 2—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Lucky Punch (4), Virgin Island (2), Elusive Quality (9), Gun Powder (1), Speed Bullet (6)
Race 3—(Qrt/Tri)—Don't Tell Ella/Monalisa (1), San Diego Force (6), Dualargo (8), District Three (5)
Race 4—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Cats on Fire (7), Zappy (5), Royal Halo (3), Ray Moon Star (2)
Race 5—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Fujioka (9), Ultra Rose (7), Irene's Fantasy (8), Vickyval (2), Circulation (5)
Race 6—(Tri)—Lovable Trisha (1), Petro Dollar (5), Whistle Blower (2)
Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Angel of Light (10), Sacred Hall (5), Gin Dancer (90, Classic Appeal (2), Big Spender (1)
Race 8—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Detective Daryll (9), Mischievous 910), Cool Turner (11), Yankee Clipper (7), Expiditer (2), Princess Dancer (12)

Canlubang sweep seen in PAL Interclub

CANLUBANG SHOOTS FOR A SECOND straight double championship when the Philippine Airlines Interclub, the country's oldest tournament for men and senior golfers, comes off the wraps next month in Cagayan de Oro City and Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon.

Teams from all over the country, to be joined by squads from the United States and Canada, are again expected take part in the annual event PAL executives conceptualized in 1947 to provide their clients with their own national tournament.

The event was launched the following year and it has been acknowledged as the national team championship ever since.

The 20th seniors event will be played from Feb. 16 to 18 and the 60th edition of the regular division is set Feb. 21-24 with competition scheduled at the Pueblo de Oro Golf Club in Cagayan de Oro and Del Monte Golf and Country Club in Manolo Fortich.

Del Monte became the first team from Mindanao to win the regular men's title the last time the Interclub was played in Cagayan de Oro and Manolo Fortich in 2004, and the club known as home of golf greats Celestino Tugot and Frankie Miñoza is rated highly again this time.

But there seems no denying Canlubang again with the way its stars ruled the last Fil-Am tournament while playing under the Nike banner.

The Canlubang seniors, expected to be led anew by Tommy Manotoc, also have no respectable opponents in sight except for their Luisita counterparts, who were outclassed the last time in Davao City.

National tournament chair Doming Duerme said he expects another big turnout even as he acknowledged the support of GE Aviation, Airbus, Boeing, GECAS, People Asia, Mizuno, Royal Caribbean, Callaway and 105.1 FM Crossover as this year's major sponsors.

The corporate backers are Fortune Tobacco, www.inquirer.net, Business Mirror/Philippine Graphic and Radio Mindanao Network. Lufthansa Technik, Asia Brewery, Foreign Post and What's On Expat Communications, C-Lium Fibre and Philtown Properties, Inc. are the other sponsors.

The ceremonial tee-off for the senior division is set at 8 a.m. on Feb. 15 while the ceremonial tee off for the regular division is at 8 a.m. Feb. 20.

The team captains' meeting for the seniors will be at Del Monte after the ceremonial drive. The men's team captains' meeting is at the Pueblo de Oro Golf and Country Club. *With a report from Musong R. Castillo*

Bill Shaw golf gets under way

A TOTAL OF 256 TEAMS TEE UP TODAY IN THE 18th Bill Shaw Memorial Golf Classic at the Wack Wack Golf and Country Club.

Millions of pesos worth of prizes are being dangled as holes-in-one prizes in the event, the biggest member-guest tournament at the Mandaluyong club.

Among the entries is Luis K. Tan, the new president of the Wack Wack board who took over from Benjamin S. Abalos, Sr., chair of the Commission on Elections.

Four luxury cars, including a Chrysler 300C, a BMW 316, a Toyota Fortuner and a top-of-the-line Toyota Innova and Cathay Pacific tickets will go to the players who will ace certain holes either at the club's East or West courses.

Three golf carts, watches, two business-class tickets between Manila and any United States East Coast destination, courtesy of Northwest Airlines, are also staked in the tournament.

An eight-day Mexican Riviera cruise courtesy of Royal Caribbean and inclusive of two Philippine Airlines tickets will also be raffled off during the awards night on Saturday at the William J. Shaw Pavilion.

Medina, De Guzman prevail

THE ENTRY OF BUSINESS MAGNATE RIC DE Guzman and Rene Medina and another entry won the National Cockers' Association (NCA) 5-cock derby last Tuesday at the Pasay City Cockpit. The 2nd NCA 5-cock derby is set today at the same venue with De Guzman and Medina as hosts. Among those competing are NCA stalwarts former Senator Ramon Revilla, people's champion Manny Pacquiao, Manolo Lopez, Gov. Ito Ynares, Sec. Ronnie Puno, Jun Santiago, Edwin Abella, Boy Jiao, Rudy Albano, Danding Cojuangco, Fiscal Villanueva, brothers Eddie and Boboy Araneta, Patrick Antonio, brothers Raffy and Mauro Prieto, JV Magsaysay, Baby Asistio, Johnny Jalandoni, Charing Magbuhos, Larry Mendoza, Joey Sarasola, Jun Marasigan, Bebot Uy, Edwin Javelosa, Randy Peralta, Jerry Barias, Tony Marfori, Johnny Lagbas, William Go, James Uy and Essie Mallillin.

75 fights in Las Piñas derby

MORE THAN 75 FIGHTS ARE ON THE ROSTER IN the popular "Fastest Win One-Cock Timbangan" which kicks off at 12 noon at the Las Piñas Coliseum. Registration for participants starts at 7 a.m. and ends at 11 a.m., with the matching of entries to follow immediately, said coliseum manager Alex Tobias, who is co-hosting the event with Yoyoy Dahonog. The fastest win champion, to be declared after every 10 fights, will receive P20,000. Another fastest-win event hosted by Jessie Banas unfolds on Saturday with the champion getting P35,000; second, P20,000; third, P10,000 and fourth to 10th placers, P5,000.

STEADY: Sophomore pro Artemio Murakami.

Murakami leads 20 'rabbits' to RP Open

By Musong R. Castillo

TRECE MARTIRES, CAVITE—FORMER AMATEUR ACE ARTEMIO MURAKAMI broke par twice during the one-day, 36-hole qualifying tournament Tuesday to lead 19 others into the main draw of the 91st Philippine Open set Feb. 14 in Wack Wack.

The 23-year-old Murakami, on his second year as a pro, opened with a three-under-par 69 and then added a 71 for a 140 total at the windswept Sherwood Golf and Country Club here.

The qualifying event was set by the Asian Tour for members of the Touring Professional Golfers Association of the Philippines (TPGAP).

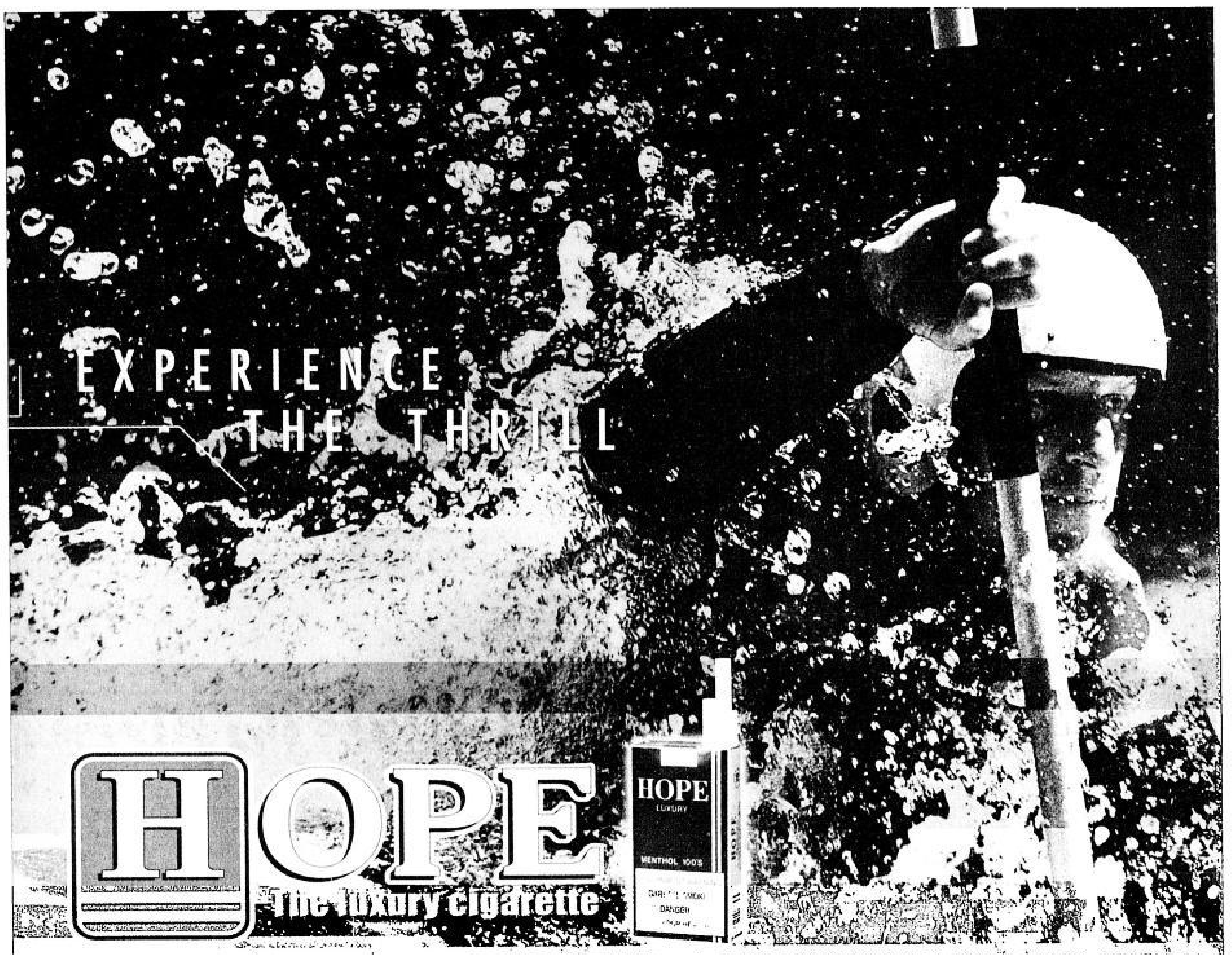
Rey Pagunsan checked in two strokes behind in second at 142 after rounds of 71-71, followed at 145 by veteran Benjie Magada (75-70) and 1990 RP Open winner Robert Pactolerin (73-72).

The other notables who made the tournament proper were Mars Pucay at 147 (71-76), and TPGAP president Cookie La'O (75-74), Danny Zarate (73-76), Eddie Bagtas (72-77) and Jherome Delariarte (71-78) all at 149.

The cut was pegged at 153, with journeyman Rey Alit and Ibarra Quiachon tying for the last spot after identical rounds of 77 and 76.

Elmer Salvador, Randy Garalde, Orland Sumcad, Richard Abaring, Edwin Estrera, Edwin Sanchez, Anthony Balan, Richard Sinfuego and Erwin Arcillas completed the list of qualifiers.

Rolando Marave, Ramil Bisera, senior campaigner Juanito Pagunsan and Ruben Sasutil were named alternates.



Government Warning:

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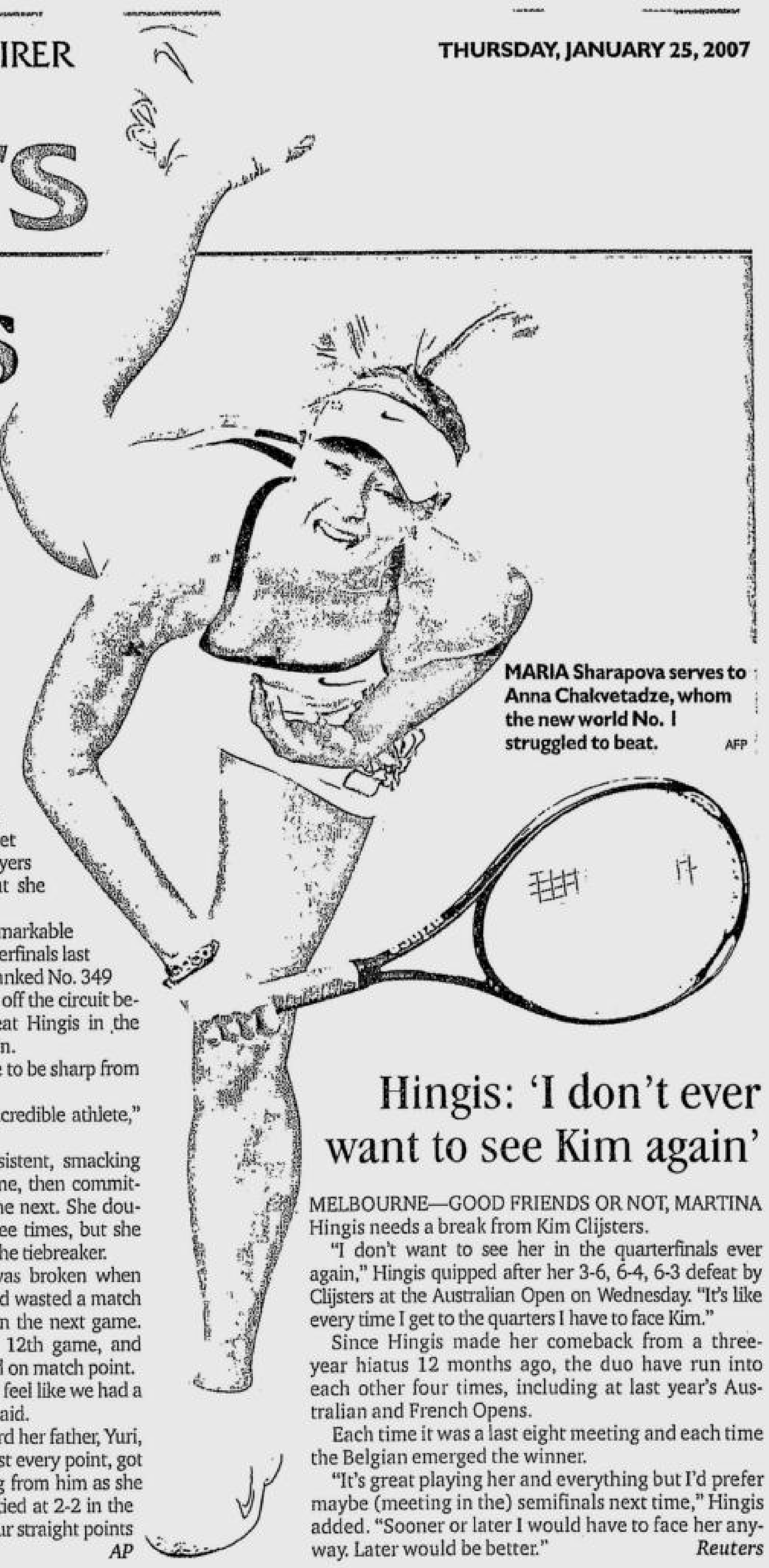
Sharapova, Clijsters struggle to advance

Upset ax fells Nadal, Davydenko



MARIA Sharapova serves to Anna Chakvetadze, whom the new world No. 1 struggled to beat. AFP

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—KIM CLIJSTERS, STARTING HER farewell tour, long has been a crowd favorite at Melbourne Park.

The fans will get at least one more chance to see her after she rallied to beat friend Martina Hingis, 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, to advance to the Australian Open semifinals.

The fourth-seeded Clijsters next meets top-seeded Maria Sharapova, who advanced to the semifinals for the third straight year with a 7-6 (5), 7-5 win over Anna Chakvetadze, a fellow 19-year-old Russian.

Tommy Haas saved a match point before upsetting third-seeded Nikolay Davydenko, 6-3, 2-6, 1-6, 6-1, 7-5, to reach the men's semifinals.

He next faces Chile's Fernando Gonzalez, who scored a major upset by ousting second-ranked Rafael Nadal, 6-2, 6-4, 6-3.

"I am really happy," Gonzalez said. "Tonight I played really unbelievable tennis."

Sharapova had trouble on serve, while Clijsters had trouble in general, but both found ways to win. Clijsters wasn't sure how after making 62 unforced errors and dropping serve five times.

"I still am asking myself," said the 23-year-old Belgian, who has announced she will retire at the end of the year, tired of nagging injuries and eager to start a family.

"I think the only two things that I did well today was I fought and I tried. That's the only thing you can do when you're not hitting the ball well and you feel like whatever you're trying is not really going your way. Hopefully, it turns it around. Luckily for me, it did."

There were few empty seats for a matchup between former champions who long have been crowd favorites here. Sixth-seeded Hingis is a three-time former champion and reached the finals three other times. The fans virtually adopted Clijsters while she was dating Australian player Lleyton Hewitt.

Clijsters, who had looked so sharp in her first four matches, had trouble with just about everything at first against Hingis and double-faulted on set point.

Hingis, trying to keep alive the prospects of an all-Swiss Slam with compatriot Roger Federer already into the men's semifinals, contributed to Clijsters' malaise with a mix-it-up strategy that included drawing the Belgian to the net, then sending lobs over her head.

"She's a player who really feels it," Clijsters said of Hingis. "She knows when the opponent's not playing well. She figures it out pretty fast. She plays on your weaknesses. I think she did that really well today."

With the mistakes piling up, the normally sedate Clijsters looked ready to smash her racket. Then she started finding the range, breaking Hingis twice to serve for the second set at 5-2. But she dumped two drop shots into the net, the second on break point.

Last break

Hingis held in the next game and had a break point to level as Clijsters served again for the set. This time, Clijsters tied the match.

Clijsters got the last break she needed after Hingis had staved off four break points while serving at 3-3. Frustrated, Hingis angrily spiked her racket in the next game, then twice kicked balls in the ninth as she fell behind 15-40 while serving at 3-5. A forehand winner down the line ended the match.

"It was definitely the most disappointing loss against her I've had," said Hingis, 0-4 against Clijsters since her comeback and 4-5 overall. "I kind of had her, but let her get back in the game. Some players wouldn't have come back, but she did."

Clijsters ended Hingis' remarkable comeback run here in the quarterfinals last year, when the Swiss star was ranked No. 349 and returning from three years off the circuit because of injuries. She also beat Hingis in the quarterfinals at the French Open.

Clijsters said she would have to be sharp from the start against Sharapova.

"She fights a lot, she's an incredible athlete," Clijsters said.

Sharapova was very inconsistent, smacking clean winners to take one game, then committing glaring mistakes to lose the next. She double-faulted on break point three times, but she had the only point on serve in the tiebreaker.

The US Open champion was broken when serving for the match at 5-3 and wasted a match point with a backhand error in the next game. She made no mistake in the 12th game, and Chakvetadze netted a forehand on match point.

"It was very difficult, I didn't feel like we had a lot of easy rallies," Sharapova said.

Sharapova, who looks toward her father, Yuri, sitting in the stands after almost every point, got a warning for getting coaching from him as she served at 0-30 with the score tied at 2-2 in the second set. She then ran off four straight points to take the game. *AP*

Hingis: 'I don't ever want to see Kim again'

MELBOURNE—GOOD FRIENDS OR NOT, MARTINA Hingis needs a break from Kim Clijsters.

"I don't want to see her in the quarterfinals ever again," Hingis quipped after her 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 defeat by Clijsters at the Australian Open on Wednesday. "It's like every time I get to the quarters I have to face Kim."

Since Hingis made her comeback from a three-year hiatus 12 months ago, the duo have run into each other four times, including at last year's Australian and French Opens.

Each time it was a last eight meeting and each time the Belgian emerged the winner.

"It's great playing her and everything but I'd prefer maybe (meeting in the) semifinals next time," Hingis added. "Sooner or later I would have to face her anyway. Later would be better." *Reuters*

Taiwanese pool shark wants a piece of Orcollo

YANG: Son of pool

ORCOLLO: Local king

EFREN "BATA" REYES, FRANCISCO "Django" Bustamante, Ronato Alcano, Lee Vann Corteza. All of them are on his list of victims.

But sitting in his own patch of kingdom in the pool world, Chinese-Taipei's Yang Ching-shun is far from satisfied. He wants to gobble up more Filipino cue artists, specifically Dennis Orcollo.

And he doesn't want a faceoff in posh world tournaments where all you need to do is reach a certain round to be assured of a piece of the purse.

He wants to square off against the Filipino in billiards' version of playground basketball, where machismo is prevalent, nerves of steel are a must and there is no consolation whatsoever for the vanquished.

Thus, Yang, known hereabouts as the "Son of Pool," is coming back to the country in April to meet Orcollo in a made-for-audience money game, a version of pool spawned in smoky, dimly-lit billiard halls that end with only the victor finding something to smile about.

Yang will face-off with Orcollo, the local money-game king, in a race-to-60 match dubbed "The Golden Pool Classic presents: Dennis Orcollo vs Yang Ching-shun; It's all about the money… and more" slated Apr. 20 to 22 and tentatively set at the Gateway Mall in Quezon City.

Most feared

Besides getting the bragging rights as money game king of the world, Orcollo and Yang will dispute the $10,000 (nearly P5 million) at stake in the event organized by Bugsy Promotions and Rocketman Enterprises.

Though he holds no world title, the 28-year-old Yang is the most feared player in Chinese-Taipei today. Even the likes of his compatriots, former world champions Fong Pang-chao and Wu Chia-ching have taken his wrath.

"Yang is really the best Taiwanese player today," said Bugsy Promotions head Perry Mariano. "He may not be as popular as Fong and Wu, but Yang is a very great player that almost everybody is afraid to face him."

Inside the game premises of last year's World Pool Championship, Yang settled for a round-of-32 finish. Outside, though, he polished off one pool star after the other in privately-arranged money matches.

Yang's fury

Among his victims then was former world No.1 Bustamante, from whom he siphoned off P150,000. Even Alcano, the eventual WPC champion, did not escape Yang's fury, yielding P150,000.

It was in Chinese-Taipei, where Yang demolished Reyes and again Bustamante.

"Orcollo is the remaining top Filipino player who Yang has yet to meet," said Rocketman top honcho Ramon "Mon" Tuason.

The 28-year-old Orcollo is so highly regarded as a money game player that very few challenge him except in a handicapped match, with him giving the opponent a built-in edge.

Orcollo also made waves in the international money game scene, including the 2007 Derby City Classic in Kentucky, where he stole the spotlight from the tournament proper by winning a couple of nationally-televised side events in sweeping fashion.

Like Yang, Orcollo is not as lucky in formal tournaments, where his greatest achievement so far is the 2006 World Pool League title.

In this aspect, Orcollo ranks below Reyes, Alex "The Lion" Pagulayan, and Alcano, all of whom he usually beat in the money game. *Marlon Bernardino, contributor*

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Milo hopes young athletes give track stars run for their money

MILO MARATH
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MILO

RACE organizer Rudy Biscocho (left) and Milo Sports Events executive Pat Goc-ong (right) share a light moment with 2006 Milo Marathon King Julius Sermona during the press conference. EDWIN BACASMAS

NATIONAL ATHLETES BETTER watch out, a horde of talented young runners are out to challenge their supremacy in the 2007 National Milo Marathon kicking off Feb. 4 in Batangas City.

These fresh standouts are hoping to break the reign of national athletes on the marathon, which last year was ruled by Team Philippines members Julius Sermona and Jho-An Banayag during the grand finals of its 30th edition.

Sermona and Banayag both went home P75,000 richer.

It was the second straight victory for Banayag, who pocketed an additional P10,000 for breaking the women's division record. Banayag retained the crown she won in 2005, beating 2004 champion Estela Mamac-Diaz and 2003 winner Liza Yambao.

In bagging his first Milo Marathon men's crown, Sermona bested top favorite Cresenciano Sabal, who ripped the course record of two-time Olympian Eduardo Buenavista in the 2005 edition.

Runners from all over the country have 24 elimination legs to join to get into the finals, according to Milo executive Pat Goc Ong in the launch of the 31st National Milo Marathon yesterday.

After the inaugural leg in Batangas City, the marathon goes to Puerto Princesa in Palawan on Feb. 11; Malolos, Bulacan, on Feb. 18; and Tarlac City on Feb. 25.

The races will then take a summer break before resuming in June with three Mindanao legs in General Santos City, Zamboanga City and Davao City.

After the Metro Manila elimination race on July 22, the Milo Marathon holds its Visayas swing in Tagbilaran City, Tacloban City, Cebu City, Dumaguete City, Roxas City and Iloilo City.

It returns to Luzon, with the Bicol region hosting back-to-back races in Naga City and Legazpi City on Sept. 9 and 16.

The grand finale is set on Nov. 18, giving the national athletes taking part enough time to recharge for the Bangkok Southeast Asian Games in December.

Granting that they get past the qualifying races. *Roy Luarca*

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Neda says economy grew 5.3-5.6% in '07

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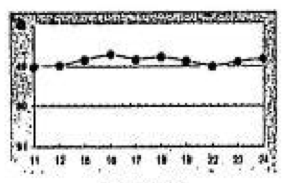


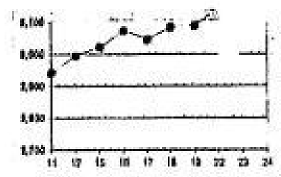
JANUARY

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 48.84 = $

As of 5 p.m., Jan. 24, 2007

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks surge 1.42%

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 1.42-PERCENT higher yesterday as foreign funds bought into the bullish outlook for the economy, dealers said.

They said the main index touched a new high in almost 10 years as easing domestic interest rates and expectations that the peso, which traded at 48.86 to the dollar, will strengthen further.

However, profit-taking in late trade trimmed some of the gains.

The composite index added 45.41 points to 3,244.75, after moving between 3,190.21 and 3,259.88. It was the index's highest close since March 13, 1997, when it settled at 3,261.24.

The broader all-share index rose 24.60

STOCKS/ B3

Typhoons cut farm output growth to 3.8-4%

By Michelle V. Remo

THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY, AS measured by the gross domestic product, likely grew anywhere between 5.3 and 5.6 percent in 2006, according to the latest estimates by the National Economic and Development Authority.

The GDP is the total value of goods and services produced in an economy for a given period.

The government has set its official GDP growth target at 5.5 percent.

Dennis Arroyo, Neda director for policy and planning, said that what would spell the

NEDA/ B3

MWSS CONCESSION TURNOVER

President Macapagal-Arroyo chats with Metro Pacific Investments Corp. president Manuel V. Pangilinan (left), Finance Secretary Margarito Teves and DMCI Holdings Inc. president Isidro Consunji in Malacañang shortly after the winning bidder for the West concession of the MWSS service area, the Metro Pacific and DM Consunji consortium, turned over a certificate of deposit worth $59 million to the government. LYN RILLON

Consumer confidence in RP up, says ACNielsen

By Ronnel W. Domingo

FILIPINO CONSUMERS' BUYING CONfidence went up in the second half of 2006 as they continued to discount the economy's performance and political stability among their top concerns, according to the latest study conducted by ACNielsen (Philippines).

The study was the second of twice-a-year polls made via the Internet, which covered 25,742 respondents in 45 markets in Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and North America. Respondents include 503 from the Philippines.

ACNielsen has been doing the study for the past six years, with the Internet chosen as the preferred medium in an effort to ease retrieval of information that are "globally comparative."

Company managing director Benedicto L. Cid Jr. said in a briefing the consumer confidence for the Philippines rose four points to 104 since the first half of last year, reflecting gains in all aspect of the index—job prospects, personal finances and inclination to spend.

Cid explained that the global consumer confidence was at 99 points, with most markets showing improvements, especially Asia-Pacific's rebound to 98 following a dip to 94.

He said the findings showed that after spending for essential living expenses, 57 percent of Filipinos prioritized putting their spare cash into savings.

Filipino-interviewees ranked sixth after those from Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam and Indonesia. They also rated higher than the global average of 40 percent.

However, only 32 percent of Filipinos polled said they used their surplus money to pay off debts, credit cards or loans. Still, this was higher than the 30 percent who said so six months earlier.

CONSUMER/ B3

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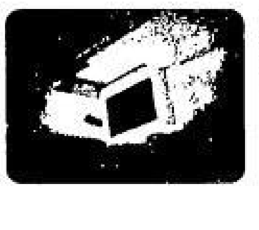

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Robinsons Land posts 40% jump in 2006 profit to ₱1.72B

Plans new malls, BPO offices

By Daxim L. Lucas

PUBLICLY LISTED ROBINSONS LAND CORP. (RLC) reported record sales and a sharp increase in its earnings for last year due to higher rental income from its malls, the company said in a statement.

For 2006, the property arm of the Gokongwei business empire made a net income of P1.72 billion, or a 40-percent increase from the P1.23 billion reported in 2005.

Total revenues for 2006 came in at P6.64 billion, the company said.

"All our business units performed very well as a result of the strategic initiatives we have pursued in recent years," RLC president and chief operating officer Frederick D. Go said. "Each business unit has expansion programs that will grow our investment property portfolio in malls, offices and hotels as well as increase our real estate sales of condominiums, subdivision land and houses."

According to the firm, its commercial centers division remained its biggest business unit responsible for almost half of RLC's gross revenues at P3.22 billion.

Revenues from shopping malls rose slightly, driven by its flagship malls Robinsons Galleria and Robinsons Place Manila.

"The improved performance in malls in Novaliches, Angeles and Pioneer also contributed to the growth of rental income," the company said.

In addition, five Robinsons malls now house call centers and BPOs. The company said this number is expected to grow "significantly" over the next few years.

"The wide geographical reach of its shopping centers have made RLC a choice landlord for BPO companies looking for new areas to tap for their fast growing businesses," the statement added.

RLC is constructing the Midtown Wing expansion area of its Robinsons Manila mall; Robinsons Place Otis 888, a strip mall fronting a residential development, and Robinsons Place Dumaguete.

RLC will also start construction of malls in Bulacan and Tagaytay as soon as it finds ideal locations in key Metro Manila and provincial areas.

RLC also disclosed that its office and residential buildings division posted a 90-percent growth in revenues for 2006 at P2.03 billion.

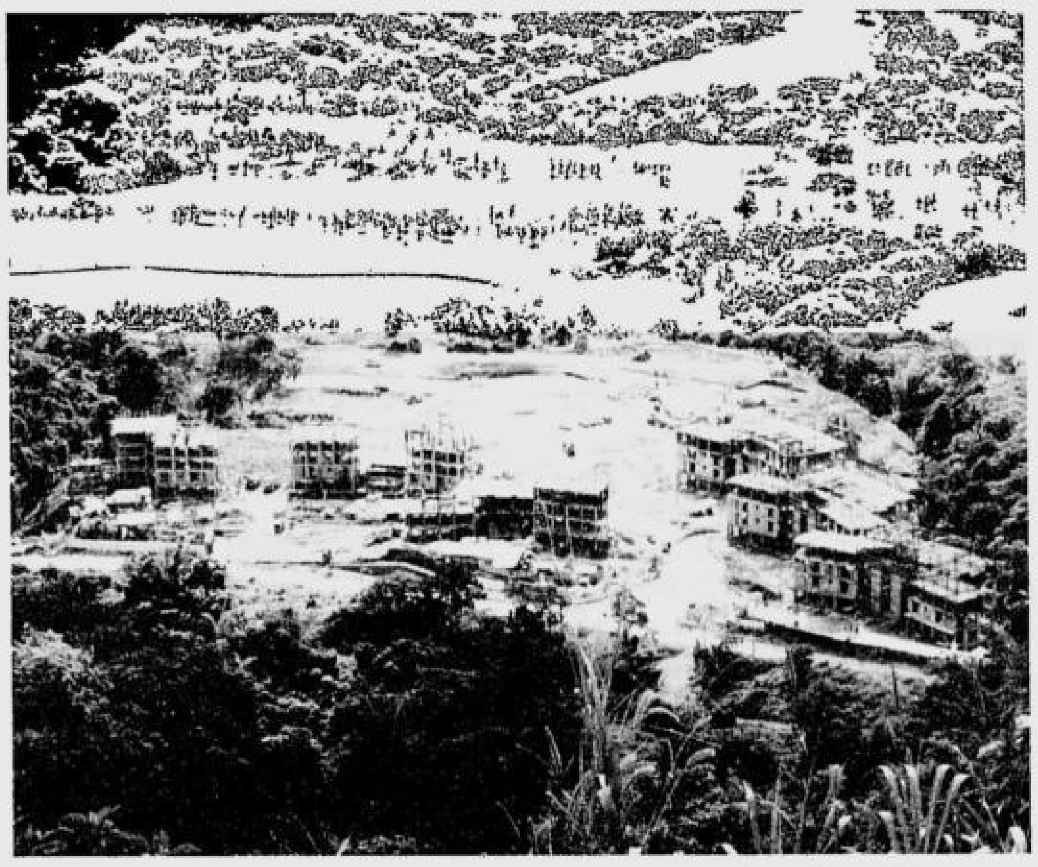
The business unit's office buildings have also been quickly taken up by top BPO industry players while its residential condominiums were selling well due to strong domestic and international demand, the company said.

RLC holds 120,000 square meters in office space in its buildings division portfolio.

During the period, its housing and land development division also reported revenues of P488 million, representing a 9-percent growth from a year ago.

Its hotels division registered an 81-percent jump in 2006 with gross revenues reaching P904 million due to the full operation of its Crowne Plaza Hotel.

Highlands Prime starts new Tagaytay project



HPI expects to earn as much as P1.8 billion in gross revenues from sales of the entire Woodridge Park project.

HIGHLANDS PRIME INC. (HPI), THE HIGH-end leisure property development arm of the SM Group, has broken ground on its latest project within its Tagaytay Highlands property aimed at the weekend vacation market.

In an interview, HPI business development manager Ricardo V. Lim said the project, dubbed Woodridge Park, is slated for completion by 2008 or possibly earlier, depending on the pace of work at the project site.

The company expects to earn as much as P1.8 billion in gross revenues from sales of the entire Woodridge Park project.

"This will be a project of almost five hectares and will have a total of 10 buildings," he said. "The project takes off from the Woodridge development, which is now sold out."

HPI held the official groundbreaking ceremony for the first phase of the project in Tagaytay Highlands last week.

Lim said that the completed Woodridge Park will have 119 units, roughly half of which will be made available for its first phase.

Depending on their sizes, the condominium units will be sold from P10 million to P20 million each, he said.

A company statement described the new project as a "log cabin-inspired residential condominium development" which "takes its inspiration from the mountain resorts of the Colorado region."

It overlooks the Tagaytay Highlands golf course, Laguna Lake and the surrounding mountains.

HPI said the project will provide residents with pocket parks, landscaped gardens and a children's playground. Penthouse units come with fireplaces to complement the year-round cool climate of the area.

Units come in three, four and five bedrooms while a limited number of loft units are also available.

The company also expects to make approximately P2 billion in revenues from the sale of its 220 units at its Horizons project in the Tagaytay Midlands area.

Lim said the firm has five more projects within the Tagaytay Highlands enclave that will be launched this year. *Daxim L. Lucas*

Farmer in the deal

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

THIS CUTE ADMINISTRATION OF GLORIA-etta seems sounding the "economic boom" trumpet, not because 2007 happens to be an election year, but more so perhaps due to the buoyant stock market of late.

What did the headline say again—highest in almost 10 years?

Well, at a daily volume of more than P6 billion, our stock market today indeed has a lot to cheer about, say, compared to the P300 million in daily volume in recent years.

Still, in terms of dollars, that's a daily volume of about $120 million.

In Thailand, in comparison, the daily volume nowadays reaches an equivalent of $300 million, and half of it comes from foreign investors. Just think of that.

* * *

STILL, the market resurgence is good for business. The Yuchengco group's universal bank RCBC for instance is busy preparing for a new stock issuance.

Now, Lorenzo Tan, the incoming president of RCBC, who by the way is still single, wants to do business with about 35 million people initially.

That is actually the number of Filipinos who earn from P15,000 to P100,000 a month—the so-called "C" market.

Catering to them, according to Tan, should be the way to go for RCBC. For one, they are the reason why the "Bench" and the "Andok's" in this country are successful.

In other words, RCBC may be taking a shot at the high-margin consumer banking, in which it never really figured prominently as a principal player.

It just dabbled in consumer lending, for instance, never really eating much in the market for credit cards, car financing or even home mortgage.

Well, in the local banking sector these days, after a flurry of mergers and acquisitions during the bad times of the past 10 years, only four groups are playing.

Three of them are the groups of taipans, namely George Ty (Metrobank and PSBank), Henry Sy (Equitable-PCI, Banco de Oro, and China Banking), and Lucio Tan (PNB and Allied Bank).

The other is of course the Ayala family, which has Bank of PI, chaired by the tech-savvy Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala.

For sometime now, RCBC has been languishing somewhere far down in the ranking of banks, together with Union Bank, for instance.

To me, RCBC and Union Bank belong to the same category in that, well, big conglomerates own them. You know—taipan Alfonso Yuchengo for RCBC, and the Aboitiz group for Union Bank.

In contrast to RCBC, Union Bank is perhaps now in the acquisition mode, after it paid recently a handsome premium to acquire the smaller i-Bank.

As for RCBC, speculation in business circles had it that the bank would probably become a target for acquisition by one of those four major players.

But RCBC chair Helen Dee, the daughter of Al Yuchengco, who is now the recognized head of the group, just started a "reorganization" of sorts in the bank.

She wants "young blood," she said, which she thinks is one sure way to energize the bank that her father founded more than 40 years ago.

Well, the hiring of a new president for RCBC coincided with the retirement of old hands in the board, such as former Trade Secretary Rizalino Navarro and former Prime Minister Cesar Virata.

Also, RCBC is going to the market to generate fresh capital of P5 billion to P8 billion, depending on how much the market can take.

Tan will then try to update the bank's technology. He thinks it is the only way to compete with those four major players.

That, and of course higher deposit interest rates!

* * *

AGRICULTURE Secretary Arthur Yap says that this cute administration of Gloriaetta is going on a massive infrastructure spending this year.

That it also happens to be an election year, of course, is nothing but mere coincidence.

The thing is, because of the good performance of the BIR, which collected some P117 billion more in 2006 than it did in 2005, this cute administration now has a lot of money to spend.

According to Yap, the Palace wants to spend the money on infrastructure. In agriculture for instance, some P3 billion will go to the rehabilitation of irrigation systems nationwide.

We really need the investment. Agriculture still accounts for about a fifth of the country's economy.

Then how come food is relatively expensive here, eating up close to half of the income of the guys down here in my barangay? I think it's because we don't have the infrastructure.

So much so that, due to the strong typhoons during the fourth quarter of 2006, the farm sector only grew by 3.88 percent, a bit lower than DA's target of 4 percent, although it was much higher than the 2005 growth of 2.3 percent.

Still, before the five—again that's FIVE—"super" typhoons dropped by to ruin our growth party, the farm sector was performing rather impressively, i.e. 4-percent growth in the first quarter, 6.6 percent in the second, and 4.22 percent in the third.

Thanks to the typhoons, the agriculture sector's growth slowed to 1.6 percent in the fourth quarter.

That's probably why, based on the DA's budget for 2007, Yap wants to put a lot of money in the repair of irrigation systems all over the country—plus probably a few billion pesos more for post harvest facilities, such as storage.

Also, we can probably look forward to multibillion-peso investments from mainland China on some 1.2 million hectares of farmlands here. Yap wrapped up those farm deals during his trip to that country last November.

For the cultivation of hybrid rice, corn and sorghum on one million hectares here, the Fu Hua Co. for instance is investing some $3.83 billion.

In joint venture with local companies, the Nanning Yongkai Industry Group also wants to put up four bioethanol plants, which will need an additional 40,000 hectares of area for sugarcane planting.

Me, I still choose investments in farms over those in the stock market anytime.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of January 24, 2007)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank, Inc.	7.2	7.4	7.2	7.2	117,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	47	48.5	46.5	47	2,639,700
Bank of the Phil. Islands	70	72	70	71.5	4,062,100
China Banking Corp.	695	695	690	690	22,620
Chinatrust Comm. Bank	24	25	24	25	1,500
Citystate Savings Bank	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	4,300
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.48	0.52	0.48	0.52	23,410,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	84	85	84	85	136,500
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	59	60.5	58.5	60	8,301,800
Philippine National Bank	49.5	49.5	49	49	39,100
Phil. Savings Bank	49	49	49	49	4,700
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	37	39.5	37	38	993,600
Security Bank Corp.	74	75	74	74	53,400
Union Bank of the Phil.	59	62	59	61.5	77,600
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
ATR Kimeng Fin. Corp.	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.2	18,000
Bankard Inc.	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	100,000
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	4.85	4.85	4.7	4.7	449,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1650	1650	1630	1630	3,380
Pci Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.56	1.56	1.54	1.56	231,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	350	360	350	355	7,560
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2030	2030	2030	2030	420
Ivantage Corp.	1.64	1.64	1.62	1.64	1,213,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	4.95	5	4.8	4.9	37,779,000
First Gen Corp.	55.5	55.5	54	54	1,760,100
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	72	72.5	71	71.5	3,562,400
Manila Electric Co. A	66.5	70.5	66.5	69.5	635,500
Manila Electric Co. B	67.5	72	67.5	71.5	2,457,300
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.2	9.2	9	9.2	3,127,000
Petron Corp.	4.15	4.15	4.1	4.1	9,786,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	20,000
Salcon Power Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	20,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.2	1.2	1.18	1.2	1,078,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	20.75	21	20.5	20.5	81,300
Jollibee Foods Corp.	44	44	44	44	399,100
RFM Corp.	1.3	1.32	1.3	1.32	203,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.85	2.9	2.85	2.85	277,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.38	0.4	0.38	0.39	340,000
San Miguel Corp. A	63	63.5	63	63.5	133,600
San Miguel Corp. B	75	76	75	76	69,400
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.12	2.12	2.08	2.08	690,000
Universal Robina Corp	19	19	18.75	19	2,955,100
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.22	1.28	1.2	1.26	47,270,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	4.2	4.2	4.15	4.2	1,282,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	3	3.2	3	3.2	109,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	8.3	8.5	8.3	8.4	9,873,000
Republic Cement Corp.	4.9	5.5	4.9	5.3	1,011,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5	5	4.9	4.9	3,163,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.77	0.8	0.77	0.8	137,050,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.21	0.22	0.21	0.215	21,470,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0095	0.01	0.0095	0.0095	591,000,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg B	0.01	0.011	0.01	0.01	60,000,000
Ayala Corp.	600	620	595	620	438,420
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.68	0.73	0.68	0.72	5,060,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	9.2	9.6	9.1	9.6	11,801,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.0775	0.0825	0.0775	0.0775	52,800,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.95	3	2.95	2.95	151,000
APC Group Inc.	0.38	0.39	0.38	0.39	3,110,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	68,600,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.14	1.16	1.1	1.14	3,928,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	3.45	4	3.45	3.8	1,553,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	1.22	1.32	1.22	1.3	709,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.65	2.65	2.6	2.6	18,064,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	7.3	7.3	7.2	7.2	1,845,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	4.8	4.85	4.8	4.8	2,567,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.28	0.28	330,000
House of Investments Inc.	2.5	2.55	2.5	2.5	591,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	12.75	12.75	12.75	12.75	507,800
Keppel Holdings B	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	10,000
Medco Holdings	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	100,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	5.1	5.4	5	5.2	3,420,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	2.02	2.04	1.96	1.98	2,260,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1	1	1	1	10,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	20,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.74	0.74	0.73	0.73	210,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.16	0.16	0.155	0.155	1,600,000
SM Investments Corp.	352.5	370	352.5	370	2,487,510
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.72	1.74	1.72	1.72	170,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.28	0.28	0.245	0.245	29,760,000
Wellex Industries Inc	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	200,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	16.5	17.5	16.25	16.75	16,560,700
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.43	0.43	0.43	0.43	80,000
Belle Corp.	1.22	1.22	1.18	1.2	3,485,000
A Brown Co. Inc.	1.9	1.94	1.86	1.9	5,375,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1,000
Crown Equities, Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	250,000
Cebu Holdings, Inc.	3.55	3.55	3.4	3.5	250,000
C&P Homes Inc.	1.66	1.66	1.66	1.66	205,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	1.8	1.82	1.8	1.82	50,000
Cebu Prop. Vent B	1.8	1.82	1.8	1.8	110,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	1,530,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.21	0.22	0.2	0.22	1,100,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.7	0.71	0.7	0.71	30,330,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.64	1.64	1.64	1.64	89,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.065	0.065	0.0625	0.065	21,500,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.18	0.18	1,710,000
Gotesco Land Inc. B	0.185	0.19	0.185	0.19	220,000
Interport Res.	0.0085	0.0095	0.0085	0.0095	162,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.009	10,000,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.7	433,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.5	0.51	0.5	0.5	2,780,000
Fil-Estate Land, Inc.	0.8	0.81	0.8	0.81	1,790,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.019	0.025	0.019	0.025	6,500,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.019	0.027	0.019	0.027	19,800,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.34	2.48	2.34	2.46	120,905,000
Metro Pacific Inv. Corp.	5.1	5.1	4.95	5	220,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.34	1,900,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	15	15.25	14.75	15.25	26,846,900
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.66	0.68	0.65	0.66	5,580,000
SM Development Corp.	3.35	3.45	3.35	3.4	8,263,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	11.75	12.25	11.75	12.25	32,546,000
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.61	0.61	0.6	0.6	290,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	5,010,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	20.5	20.75	20.5	20.75	124,100
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	2	2	1.96	1.98	4,262,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1290	1295	1285	1285	54,680
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.8	6.8	6.6	6.8	3,554,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2715	2765	2700	2740	246,310
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.31	0.32	0.29	0.29	59,900,000
Ionics Inc.	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.65	2,297,000
IPVG Corp.	3.9	3.9	3.85	3.85	160,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.0625	0.0625	0.06	0.06	25,200,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	600,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	30,000
Transpacific Broadband	2.46	2.46	2.38	2.38	1,000,000
Philweb Corp	0.036	0.036	0.033	0.034	324,100,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4	4.2	4	4.2	23,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.6	82,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	23.75	23.75	23.75	23.75	199,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	100,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.06	2.06	2.02	2.06	1,607,000
Manila Jockey Club	3.1	3.5	3.1	3.5	63,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.35	0.35	0.34	0.34	350,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.61	0.62	0.61	0.61	1,440,000
EDUCATION					
Far Eastern University	850	850	850	850	100
Ipeople Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	84,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	2.16	2.16	2.1	2.1	551,000
Paxys Inc.	22	22.75	22	22.5	425,900
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	5.4	5.4	5.2	5.2	542,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	5.4	5.4	5.2	5.2	323,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.012	0.011	0.011	287,400,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	9.1	9.1	8.9	9	696,000
Benguet Corp. A	9.4	9.5	9.4	9.5	50,000
Benguet Corp. B	29	29	29	29	4,700
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.7	2.75	2.65	2.65	198,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	378,660,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	86,460,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.026	0.026	0.025	0.026	237,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.03	0.03	0.029	0.029	211,300,000
Omico Corp.	0.012	0.013	0.012	0.013	10,400,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.05	4.15	3.9	3.95	21,283,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	14.75	15	14.75	15	248,400
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.69	0.69	0.68	0.68	990,000
Vulcan Ind'l	1.66	1.66	1.54	1.56	12,684,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	1,010,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	82,900,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.013	0.013	0.013	0.013	142,200,000
The Philodrill Corp.	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.011	101,800,000
Pnoc Exploration Corp.-B	24.75	24.75	24.75	24.75	1,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	11	11	10.25	10.25	150,500

CURRENCIES

January 24, 2007 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.767578	1.000000	49.0490
Japan	Yen	0.006309	0.008220	0.4032
United Kingdom	Pound	1.520955	1.981500	97.1906
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.098405	0.128202	6.2882
Switzerland	Franc	0.617669	0.804699	39.4697
Canada	Dollar	0.650490	0.847458	41.5670
Singapore	Dollar	0.500312	0.651806	31.9704
Australia	Dollar	0.608464	0.792707	38.8815
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.036015	2.652520	130.1035
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.204665	0.266638	13.0783
Brunei	Dollar	0.498686	0.649688	31.8665
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000084	0.000110	0.0054
Thailand	Baht	0.021993	0.028653	1.4054
UAE	Dirham	0.209001	0.272287	13.3554
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.302800	63.9010
Korea	Won	0.000817	0.001064	0.0522
China	Yuan**	0.098684	0.128566	6.3060
Argentina	Peso	0.248006	0.323102	15.8478
Brazil	Real	0.359690	0.468604	22.9846
Denmark	Kroner	0.134185	0.174816	8.5745
India	Rupee	0.017389	0.022655	1.1112
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.219276	0.285673	14.0120
Mexico	New Peso	0.070156	0.091399	4.4830
New Zealand	Dollar	0.538084	0.701016	34.3841
South Africa	Rand	0.108148	0.140895	6.9108
Sweden	Kroner	0.110120	0.143464	7.0368
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023299	0.030354	1.4888

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—Jan. 23, 2007

* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen.

** Asian time closing rate as of Jan. 23, 2007

World's 4th largest economy said to grow 10.5%

BEIJING—CHINA'S ECONOMY, THE fourth largest in the world, probably grew by 10.5 percent last year, a top tax official said Wednesday.

"Gross domestic product is estimated to have risen by 10.5 percent last year," Xie Xuren, the head of the State Administration of Taxation, told reporters at a press conference.

The figure is almost the same as the 10.4 percent growth recorded in 2005, according to revised figures published earlier this week.

In the first three quarters of 2006, China's economy expanded by 10.7 percent, according to figures released earlier by the National Bureau of Statistics.

Xie's figure for economic growth in 2006 was the same as an estimate from the National Development and Reform Commission published earlier this month.

China's top tax official also said that fixed-asset investment was likely to have grown by around 25 percent in 2006, boosting fast tax revenue rises in the construction material industry, construction and installation industry, and the real estate sector.

China's fixed asset investment, measuring the government's spending on new plant and equipment and other productive capacity, rose 25.7 percent in 2005.

Industrial output, a key measure of the economic temperature of the country, probably increased by 18 percent last year, China's top tax official said, adding the growth rate of large-scale enterprises was even higher.

In 2005, China's industrial output increased by 11.4 percent.

The government is due to publish its official 2006 growth figures Thursday. *AFP*

Asia stocks lifted by firmer oil prices

Rising base metals prices also boosted commodities-related stocks

SINGAPORE—ASIAN STOCKS YESTERDAY rose, with Japan's Nikkei posting a nine-month closing high as shares in exporters such as Toyota gained on expectations that a weaker yen would prompt them to lift their earnings forecasts.

Also, Financial bookmakers in London forecast the FTSE 100 index would open 0.2-0.3 percent higher.

A more than 4-percent surge in oil and rising gold and base metals prices boosted commodities-related stocks, propelling Australia's resource-heavy main index to a record close.

Benchmarks in Hong Kong, Singapore and China were also on course for record closes.

The main indexes in South Korea and Taiwan closed 1-1.5 percent higher as technology stocks—battered last week by weaker-than-expected earnings outlooks from global bellwethers such as Intel Corp.—rebounded strongly.

Oil eased below $55 a barrel, after racing nearly $2.50 higher on Tuesday as the United States announced plans to build up its Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) and as colder weather pushed up demand in the world's top consumer.

"The SPR news is very supportive of the price," said Andrew Harrington, a resource analyst at ANZ Bank. "And if you want to consider the Chinese strategic reserves, they have also been filling their reservoirs, all of that is very, very supportive." NYMEX crude for March delivery fell 27 cents to $54.77 a barrel.

Hong Kong-listed shares in top Chinese oil and gas producer PetroChina rose 2.2 percent, while Australia's Woodside Petroleum gained 1.7 percent and Japanese oil developer INPEX Holdings was up 2.4 percent.

"Worries about the outlook for the first quarter and beyond have hit tech shares recently," said Lee Woo-hyun, an analyst at Kyobo Securities in South Korea. "But there's a feeling in the market that the shares have already reflected those lowered expectations, and there's no need to overreact."

Interest rate differentials have dominated currency markets in recent sessions and hobbled the low-yielding yen, which also dipped near four-year lows against the dollar and hovered close to a 14-year low against sterling.

Bank of Japan governor Toshihiko Fukui told Reuters in an interview on Tuesday that higher rates could ultimately benefit the Japanese economy, but the BOJ would rather err on the side of caution as long as data was mixed.

"His comments did not give the impression that views are tilted in any staggering way toward raising interest rates in February," said Masafumi Yamamoto, a currency strategist for Nikko Citigroup in Tokyo.

The dollar rose as high as 121.79 yen, within a whisker of a 4-year high of 121.80 yen hit earlier this week, before easing back to around 121.46 yen.

The benchmark 10-year Japanese government bond yield edged up 0.5 basis point to 1.655 percent.

Tokyo's Nikkei gained 0.6 percent to its best finish since April 2006, after earlier rising within touching distance of a 6-1/2-year peak.

MSCI's broadest index of shares elsewhere in Asia rose 0.5 percent by 0610 GMT, when its tech sub-index was up 1.5 percent. *Reuters*

A TECHNICIAN makes a change to a stock board at a securities firm used for day trading in Shanghai. A year-long rally in China's red-hot stock markets has prompted concerns of a bubble, and put the government in a damned if you do, damned if you don't situation, analysts said. Regulators are loath to apply the brakes for fear of sending share prices into a tailspin, but delaying necessary cooling measures could eventually prove extremely costly. AFP

Thailand risks losing property to RP, Malaysia

THAILAND RISKS LOSING SOME OF ITS RESORT home market to Southeast Asian rivals Malaysia and the Philippines if it goes ahead with plans to close a loophole that lets foreigners own freehold property.

Foreigners cannot own landed property, according to Thai law, only apartments. But many buyers have sidestepped the rule by holding property through a local company, which they control because Thai "nominee" majority shareholders waive voting rights.

The Thai government wants to change the Foreign Business Act to outlaw such nominees, leaving foreigners with only the option of a maximum 30-year lease.

The proposal has made some home owners and prospective buyers nervous, analysts say.

The southern islands of Samui and Phuket have become hotspots in the last couple of years, with $100,000 apartments and $5 million beach villas selling quickly at property fairs from Stockholm and Moscow to Hong Kong.

Although some projects were still seeing steady sales, David Simister, chairman of property consultants CB Richard Ellis in Thailand, said the government should not take demand for granted.

"You can't assume you'll have people's interest forever," Simister said. "Thailand is seen as a desirable place for resort property. But Malaysia has, quite frankly, a better legal framework."

Thailand should raise the maximum leasehold to 90 years to attract new buyers and allow owners of property held in nominee companies to convert to a long-term lease, Simister said.

The limit on foreign ownership of a condominium project also should be raised to 90 percent from 49 percent to reflect the foreign share of property sales in Thai resorts, he added.

Thailand's government, installed after a military coup in September, jolted markets this month when it said it would amend the Foreign Business Act.

The revision was derived from probes into former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the government admitted.

In particular, the move stemmed from the $1.9-billion sale by Thaksin's family of its controlling stake in the Shin Corp. telecom empire to Singapore state investment firm Temasek. Temasek executed the deal through a complicated web of Thai holding companies.

The proposed rule changes have been approved by the Cabinet. But there is no word on when the military-appointed National Legislative Assembly will pass them into law.

Malaysia has been vying with Thailand and the Philippines to draw wealthy retirees, giving a package of a 10-year renewable multi-entry visa and tax exemptions on pensions. *Reuters*

Bush urges Americans to cut gasoline use by 20%

WASHINGTON—PRESIDENT GEORGE W. Bush on Tuesday called for Americans to cut their gasoline use by 20 percent over a decade, mostly through a nearly five-fold increase in use of home-grown fuels such as ethanol by 2017.

In his annual State of the Union address to Congress, Bush also called for tighter vehicle fuel efficiency standards and doubling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve's capacity to 1.5 billion barrels by 2027.

Bush asked US lawmakers to "join me in pursuing a great goal" of reducing gasoline consumption by 20 percent—the equivalent of 75 percent of current oil imports from the Middle East.

Most of that reduction comes from a massive increase in ethanol made from both corn and unconventional sources such as wood chips and farm cast-offs.

"We must continue investing in new methods of producing ethanol—using everything from wood chips, to grasses, to agricultural wastes," Bush said.

Bush's "Twenty by Ten" strategy furthers a theme he has tried to drive home in his annual speeches since 2001 to cut US dependence on crude oil imports. In a surprise pronouncement a year ago, Bush said the United States was addicted to crude oil.

Bush steered clear of calling for mandatory caps on US emissions of carbon dioxide, despite a concerted push by big US companies like General Electric Co. to cut heat-trapping emissions. In his speech, Bush called global climate change a "serious challenge" that should be addressed through technology.

Bush also called for more use of hybrid vehicles and electricity produced from carbon-free sources like wind, solar and nuclear power plants.

A rising focus on "energy security" by both the Bush administration and Congress has added momentum to efforts to employ home-grown fuel sources like ethanol to reduce US dependency on oil imports.

About 60 percent of US petroleum supplies currently come from imports.

Specifically, Bush called for Congress to raise a mandatory federal renewable fuels standard to 35 billion gallons by 2017, and increase the scope of the program to include fuels like cellulosic ethanol, biodiesel and methanol. That alone would displace about 15 percent of annual US gasoline use, the White House said.

The rest of the reduction would come from reforming US automobile fuel efficiency standards, which could save about 8.5 billion gallons of gasoline in 2017, the White House said.

Big automakers, DaimlerChrysler AG, parent of US-based Chrysler Group, and Ford Motor Co., said overhauling standards as Bush proposes is preferable to new mandates using the current formula of fleet-wide averages, which some Democrats seek.

Current US law requires 7.5 billion gallons of renewable fuels to be mixed with gasoline supplies by 2012. US renewable fuel consumption will likely reach that target ahead of schedule—biorefineries produced about 5 billion gallons of ethanol last year.

The US corn-growing lobby applauded the proposal, but crude oil refiners and livestock producers warned it could lead to higher prices at the gas pump and the supermarket.

US corn prices have nearly doubled since last fall, mostly due to soaring demand for ethanol, which has replaced the water-polluting methyl tertiary butyl ether as the additive of choice for refiners to comply with federal clean air rules. *Reuters*

Stocks . . .

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points to 1,998.25.

Gainers led losers 67 to 49, while 49 stocks were unchanged. Turnover was P6.24 billion with a total of 3.68 billion shares traded.

"The market maintained its impressive momentum given the bullish sentiment," said Rommel Macapagal of Westlink Global Equities.

"We cannot discount a correction in the next session because the upsurge was too fast and too soon. But a rally toward the main index's all-time high of 3,447.60 is still possible," he added.

The index's highest close was recorded on Feb. 3, 1997.

The government announced during trading hours that the domestic economy likely grew by 5.3-5.6 percent last year, driven by domestic consumption and exports.

"With lower interest rates and a strong peso, equities are among the few options left for investors looking for better yields," said Nestor Aguila of DA Market Securities.

Top-traded SM Investments rose P20 to P370 while Ayala Corp. added P20 to P620.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. advanced P20 to P2,740.

Baguio Gold Holdings surged 60 centavos to P3.80 on renewed investor interest amid expectations it will be used as the backdoor listing vehicle for flag carrier Philippine Airlines. *AFP*

Consumer confidence in RP up, says ACNielsen

From page B1

Cid said an uptrend was observed among Filipinos' purchases of new technology—36 percent from 32 percent and 27 percent in the two earlier rounds of polls.

At the same time, fewer and fewer were spending for out-of-home entertainment—17 percent from 23 percent and 24 percent.

Those spending for holidays and vacations were found relatively stable at 24 percent and investing in mutual funds or shares of stocks at 16 percent.

Those spending for new clothes decreased to 34 percent and for home improvements or decorating to 15 percent.

One out of 10 Filipinos interviewed said he or she had no spare cash.

Neda says economy grew . . .

From page B1

difference between hitting or missing the 5.5-percent target would be the exact value of the impact of the typhoons on agricultural output, as computed by the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB).

Arroyo said the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector, whose production was affected by a series of typhoons last year, was estimated to have expanded by 3.8 to 4 percent. The estimated growth for the agriculture was the lowest among the economy's three major sectors.

The industry sector was estimated to have grown by 5.2 to 5.4 percent, Arroyo said, while output by the services sector was believed to have increased by 6 to 6.3 percent.

For the fourth quarter, Arroyo said, GDP growth was estimated at 5.1 to 5.9 percent.

Gross national product (GNP), which includes net factor income from abroad such as compensation earned by overseas Filipino workers, likely grew by 6.2 to 6.4 percent, Arroyo said.

The official said growth in consumption, resulting partly from the huge inflows of dollar remittances from OFWs, was one of the key drivers of growth last year.

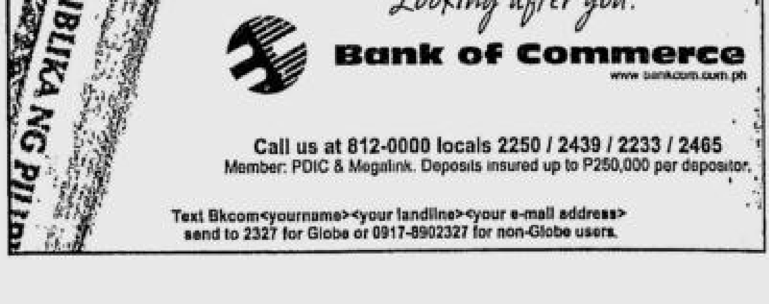
He added that the better-than-expected performance of the export sector, which grew by 16.4 percent from January to October 2006, helped boost the economy for 2006 and eased the impact of the typhoons on farm output.

"Exports growth for the full year (of 2006) would definitely be in the double-digit, which is much higher than the original target of only 8 percent," Arroyo said.

Growth in exports last year was attributed to the increase in global demand for electronics, the country's main export product.

Arroyo said other growth drivers for 2006 included manufacturing, transportation and communication, trade, finance, real estate and private services.

The real estate subsector was supported by the decline in interest rates, which made it more affordable for people to invest in property, he said.



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"So dearly loved but terribly missed"

In Loving Memory

on the
6th Death Anniversary
of

RODOLFO "BABE" O. DESIDERIO

who passed away on January 25, 2001.

His loving wife **Gloria**; daughter **Geraldine**; son-in-law **Ian** and grandchildren **Igi**, **Isa** and **Ino**, request your prayers for the eternal repose of his soul.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass shall be offered at the following churches:

Emmanuel Servants of the Holy Trinity (West Fairview, Q.C.)	5:30 a.m.
Sto. Domingo Church, Banawe, Quezon City	5:45 a.m.
Mary Help of Christian Parish, Maypajo, Caloocan City	6:00 a.m.
Sanctuario de San Jose, Greenhills East, Mandaluyong City	7:15 a.m.
Archdiocesan Shrine of Nuestra Señora de Guia, Ermita, Manila	8:00 a.m.
Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene, Quiapo, Manila	8:00 a.m.
Sta. Cruz Parish Church, Sta. Cruz, Manila	8:00 a.m.
St. Joseph Cathedral, Balanga, Bataan	5:00 p.m.
Holy Trinity Parish, Don Jose Hts., Q.C.	6:00 p.m.

In Loving Memory

on the Fifth Death Anniversary of

JOSE M. ESTEBAN, JR.

who peacefully joined his Creator
on January 25, 2002.

His wife Menchu, children, and grandchildren, request relatives and friends to join them in remembering and praying for Joe.

HOLY MASSES WILL BE OFFERED AT THE FOLLOWING CHURCHES:

- **Shrine of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel**, *New Manila, Quezon City*
- **Our Lady of Fatima Church**, *Highway Hills, Mandaluyong City*
- **St. Francis Church**, *Shaw Blvd., Mandaluyong City*
- **Sta. Rosa de Lima**, *Bagong Ilog, Pasig City*
- **San Exequiel Moreno Church**, *Larangay St., Caloocan City*
- **St. Stephen Church**, *Laur, Nueva Ecija*
- **Asuncion Church**, *Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur*
- **Assumption Church**, *F. Torres, Davao City*
- **Our Lady of Lourdes**, *Bangkal, Davao City*

"Come unto me all you who labor, and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Remember with love

LILI-ANN GONZALEZ LOPEZ

who was called by our Heavenly Father to eternal life on December 8, 2006 at Las Vegas, Nevada, U.S.A.

Her memory is kept alive by her son **Carlo**; mother **Lilia**; siblings **Claire** and **Ramon**, **Benjamin Jr.**, **Marijo**, **Valerie** and **Rommel**, nephews **Patrick**, **David** and **Gabriel** and niece **Julia**.

Her cremated remains will lie in state at the Chapel of the Divine Peace at St. John the Baptist Church in Pinaglabanan, San Juan, Metro Manila on January 27 and 28, 2007.

Interment will be on January 28, 2007 at the Cathedral Grottos of the Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Lantana Street, Cubao, Quezon City after the 2:00 p.m. Holy Mass.

Ma. Consuelo "Ching" Albano Mendoza

August 12, 1931 - January 16, 2007

Now rests peacefully in the Grace of our Lord.

Her children and their spouses: **Vincent** and **Vilma**, **Joey** and **Nena**, **Ricky** and **Pinky**, **Hector** and **Menchee**, **Danny** and **Cecile**, **Chiqui** and **Mitch**, **Marissa** and **Michael**, **Edwin** and **Carmela**; her only surviving sister **Carmen Chavez**; all her grandchildren, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains were cremated in Paterson, New Jersey and will be flown to the Philippines arriving on Friday, January 26, 2007. She will be waked at the Lower Chapel of the Parish of St. James the Great, Ayala Alabang Village in Muntinlupa City as follows:

Saturday, January 27: 6 to 11PM with Holy Mass at 8PM
Sunday, January 28: 2 to 10PM with Holy Mass at 8PM

The Funeral Mass will be celebrated at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, January 29, 2007 at the Lower Chapel, St. James the Great. Inurnment will follow immediately at the Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque.

In Loving Memory

EDITHA MONASTERIO PULIDO

On The 19th Annivesary of Her Birth To Eternal Life
(6 June 1934 - 25 January 1988)

The **EDITHA MONASTERIO PULIDO MEMORIAL FOUNDATION, INC.** and her family request the pious reader to pray for her eternal repose.

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even if he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die."

JOHN 11:25-26

MARILOU CARANTO DIAZ

Now rests in the infinite warmth and embrace of our Lord. She joined our Creator on January 19, 2007 at the age of 42.

Her bereaved husband **Gigi**, only daughter **Valerie Joyce**, her brother and sisters; in-laws, nephews and nieces, relatives and friends request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Our Lady of Assumption beside Pasig Cathedral, Pasig City.

Interment will be on Saturday, January 27, 2007 at Garden of Memories Pateros after the 1p.m. Mass at Pasig Cathedral.

In Loving Memory

On the
26th Death Anniversary of

MARIANO B. PEÑAFLORIDA

who passed away
on 26 January 1981.

Masses will be offered Friday, 26 January 2007 at the following:

Santuario de San Antonio *Forbes Park*	12:15 NN
Sanctuario de San Jose *Greenhills*	7:15 AM
St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori *Magallanes*	6:00 PM
Our Lady of Beautiful Love *Merville*	7:00 PM
Parish of the Holy Sacrifice *U.P.*	6:00 PM
St. Joseph's Church, Pototan *Iloilo*	5:30 AM
St. Clement's Church, La Paz *Iloilo*	5:30 PM

The family requests relatives, friends, and pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul

---

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
2 Corinthians 5:8

Death Notices

ROLANDO FABUL SABROSO

of Buhi, Camarines Sur

Born: Oct. 20, 1953
Died: Jan. 22, 2007

Interment will be on Saturday, Jan. 27, after the 1 p.m. Mass at Buhi Catholic Cemetery.

PERFECTO MARTINEZ PEREZ

Peacefully joined the Lord on Jan. 22, 2007.

His body lies in state at Ipil Chapel, La Funeraria Paz, Sucat, Parañaque.

Cremation will be tomorrow, Jan. 26 at 10:00 am after the final service at 8:30 at La Funeraria Paz.

ATTY. JOSE F. MIRAVITE

Died in Fairfield, CA on Nov. 8, 2007.

Relatives and friends are invited to join his family for a Requiem Mass on January 27, 2007, 8:30 am at the Twin Hearts of Jesus and Mary Parish, Bulletin St., West Triangle, Quezon City.

ETHELDREDA PANGANIBAN RAMIREZ

of Lobo, Batangas, NAIA Pasay City and
West Covina, California, USA

*Peacefully joined our lord and her husband, **Gerardo E. Ramirez, Sr.** on January 23, 2007 in Metro Manila, Philippines.*

Her children **Serafin & Bella**, **Cecilia & Alain Graziani**, **Heranio & Cynthia**, **Gerardo Jr. & Terry**, **Carleen Marquez**; grandchildren, relatives & friends, request the pious readers to pray that the gates of heaven will be opened for her.

Her remains lie in state at Lumbang Room, La Funeraria Paz – Sucat (inside Manila Memorial Park) Parañaque City up to Thursday evening January 25, 2007. Her body will be transferred in the morning of Friday, January 26, 2007 to Lobo Batangas where interment will be held at 2:00 p.m. Sunday, January 28, 2007.

I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race, I have kept the faith
(2 Timothy 4)

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OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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We, the family of the late
Francisca Alviar Valle
"Paquita"
wishes to thank all who sympathized and prayed
for our beloved Mommy who passed away
last 18th of December, 2006.

Holy Mass will be held on 26 January 2007
at 3:30 p.m., at the Our Lady of the Holy Rosary
Parish, Brgy. Maysan, Valenzuela City
on the occasion of the 40th day of her death.

-Ronnie and Nesa (Guerrero) Valle, Lorna and Al Umali, Myrna Valle Gonzales
-Brian, Alvin, Missy, Arwin and Aingeo

Aini Chalid

Chairman, SINDOPHIL, INC.
August 23, 1947 - January 23, 2007

His loving wife, **Victoria Yapchiongco-Chalid**,
relatives and friends, request the pious readers
to join in prayers for his happiness in heaven.

His remains lie in state at Chapel 1 of the
Mortuary and Crematory of The Heritage Park.

Interment will be on Saturday, January 27, 2007
at Krus sa Wawa Memorial Park, Bocaue, Bulacan
after the 12 noon Necrological Mass at
The Heritage Park, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

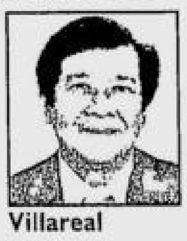
Mortuary and Crematory at The Heritage Park

CLASSIFIEDS

ICD's annual convention set

Pangilinan

Dizon


Villareal

Meloto

THE INTERNATIONAL College of Dentists (ICD Philippines Section Inc.) will hold its 40th Annual Convocation and Banquet on Sunday, Jan. 28 at 6 PM at the Diamond Hotel, Roxas Blvd. cor. Dr. J. Quintos St., Malate, Manila.

Highlighting the affair will be the induction of the new set of officers for 2007, the investiture of seven new fellows and the keynote speech of the guest of honor and inducting officer, Sen. Francis N. Pangilinan.

The new ICD officers to be inducted are: Fellows Ma. Fatima Sevilla-Dizon, president; Ma. Teresa D. Amador, president-elect; Elizabeth C. Carrasco, vice-president; Elaine P. del Rosario, secretary; Norma A. Tiu, treasurer; Rosita S. Tan, auditor; Marilyn A. Leung, PRO; Ma. Rosario A. Damatac, and Leonor C. Lago, directors; Hermogenes P. Villareal, immediate past president.

To be inducted into the ICD Fellowship are Drs. Joel S. Gutierrez, Ramon N. Hebron, Gary M. Batiller, Vivian C. Virata, Marie Antoniette R. Veluz, Maria Xenia A. Velmonte, and Vivian Gabaldon. Awards will be conferred upon Fellows Diampo J. Lim, Antonio A. Baldemor, Eufracio A. de Jesus, Aida H. Salcedo, and Ligaya C. Virata for the Life Membership Award. Honorary Fellowship Award will likewise be given to Dr. Estela V. Avendaño.

The business meeting will start at 3:00 PM, followed by the Bienvenido B. Eraña Memorial Lecture with Antonio Meloto, 2006 Ramon Magsaysay Awardee for Community Leadership – Gawad Kalinga, as guest speaker.

National Sales rally set on Jan. 26

START THE YEAR 2007 with a bang! Don't miss the National Sales Rally dubbed as Exsellence Part 2 – Conquering an Enemy called Average slated on Jan. 26, 8:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Galleria.

Distinguished speakers include Cecilio Pedro, president and CEO of Lamoiyan Corp, Donald Lim, CEO of Yehey.com and president of Philippine Marketing Association; Jos, Ortega, chair and CEO of Brandlab, Jesse Rebustillo, Head of Classified Ads Division of Philippine Daily Inquirer; John Mangun, Managing Director of Aranca Research Phils., Inc; and Rene Espinosa, Managing Director of Porter & Miles, Inc.It is organized by Porter and Miles, Inc., a premier training company on business, management, marketing, sales and human resource development.

You may call Mercy at 638-7719 / 20 for more information / registration.

NOTICE OF DISSOLUTION

Rodita S. Bombita Josephine L. Nunes
Ludy B. Bolague John Raymond Grundy

We, the American Longevity Philippines with an address at Unit C, 8th Floor PDCP Bank Center, P. Leviste St., Salcedo Village, Makati City has shorten its term of corporate existence effective December 5, 2006.

(PDI--Jan. 11, 18 & 25, 2007)

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- Must know the rules and regulations of POEA regarding deployment of seafarers and familiar with the provisions and regulations of STCW95 and SOLAS
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APOLOGY

RNY AUTO PARTS SALES APOLOGIZES FOR SELLING COUNTERFEIT MITSUBISHI CONSUMABLE AUTOMOTIVE ITEMS

We hereby apologize to MITSUBISHI JUKOGYO KABUSHIKI KAISHA through its counsel BENGZON NEGRE UNTALAN Intellectual Property Attorneys, to our customers and the Filipino public for selling counterfeit MITSUBISHI consumable automotive items (e.g. oil filter).

We recognize that under R.A. 8293, it is an infringement of trademark rights to use without authority the trademarks of another, or a reproduction or imitation thereof in connection with the sale and distribution of goods. Importing, selling, distributing and otherwise dealing in counterfeit Mitsubishi spare parts is also a form of unfair competition. Trademark infringement and unfair competition are separate offenses punishable by imprisonment ranging from 2 to 5 years **plus** a fine ranging from P50,000 to P200,000.

We thank MITSUBISHI JUKOGYO KABUSHIKI KAISHA for giving us the opportunity to reform. We promise not to commit these acts of infringement and unfair competition again.

This apology ad is entirely paid for by RNY Auto Parts Service.

(PDI–January 25, 2007)

TARLAC I ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

(TARELCO I)
AMACALAN, GERONA, TARLAC
"OWNED BY THE PEOPLE IT SERVES"

INVITATION TO BID

The Tarlac I Electric Cooperative, Inc. (TARELCO I) invites qualified and eligible bidders to bid for the following:

LOT 1
A. Supply, Delivery and Installation of 69 KV Metering
B. Supply, Delivery and Installation of Primary and Secondary Protection
C. Reconditioning and Installation of 5 MVA Power Transformer

LOT 2
Construction of 69 KV Sub-Transmission Line from Matalapitap, Paniqui, Tarlac to Mabini, Moncada, Tarlac (10.8 KMS.)

A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased starting January 29, 2007 until February 5, 2007 by eligible bidders upon submission of a written application to the above and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Four Thousand Pesos (P4,000.00) for each lot.

Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the bidding documents at the office of the PBAC, TARELCO I, Amacalan, Gerona, Tarlac, with Tel Nos. (045) 931-0971 to 75. Pre-bid Conference will be held on February 6, 2007 at 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon at the Coop Boardroom, also of the same address.

Sealed proposals in two (2) copies will be received by the TARELCO I PBAC at exactly 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon at the coop boardroom on February 9, 2007, at which time and place the said proposal will be opened and read in the presence of Bidders or Bidder's representative who choose to attend. Late submission will not be accepted.

All bids submitted must be accompanied by a Bid Security equivalent to fifteen percent (15%) of the total bid price.

TARELCO I hereby reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to waive any defects therein, and accept the bid that is most advantageous to the cooperative.

(Sgd.) ALICE C. BALDOZ
PBAC Chairman

(PDI--Jan. 25 & 26, 2007)

Holy Spirit. Thou who make me see everything and show me the way to reach my ideal. You who give me the divine gift to forgive and forget the wrong that is done to me and who are in all instances of my life with me, I in this short dialogue want to thank You for everything and confirm once more that I never want to be separated from You no matter how great the material desires may be. I want to be with and my loved ones in Your perpetual glory Amen. Person must pray this 3 consecutive days, without stating one's wish. After 3rd day your wish will be granted no matter how difficult it may be. Promise to publish this as soon as your favor has been granted.

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PNOC-ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Energy Complex, Merritt Road
Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City
Tel. No. 893-1320, Local 5279

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND BID

The PNOC-Energy Development Corporation is inviting all interested suppliers to apply and submit sealed bids for the supply and delivery of the following:

190 Joints of 3-1/2" dia. of Drill Pipes	*FDM 63315*	PHP 16,200,000.00
Various Sizes of Carbon Steel Pipes	*FGJ 60922*	PHP 4,700,000.00
Various Sizes of Flanged Gate Valves	*FGJ 60709*	PHP 12,600,000.00

Eligibility forms and bidding documents shall be available for issuance at the above address c/o **Eloisa J. Hufana** starting **January 25, 2007**, and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of PHP 400.00 per document.

For purposes of clarifying certain matters, a pre-bidding conference shall be held on:

January 31, 2007	**FGJ 60709**
February 1, 2007	**FGJ 60922**
February 8, 2007	**FDM 63315**

2:00 p.m. at the above address.

Applications for eligibility and sealed bids shall be submitted to, and registered with the PNOC-EDC Supply, Property and Materials Management Division at the above address, and thereafter, dropped in the padlocked bid box thereat not later than **2:00 p.m. (Supply Management's Office Wall Clock Time) of February 14, 2007 for FGJ 60709, February 16, 2007 for FGJ 60922 and February 22, 2007 for FDM 63315.** Public opening of bids shall follow immediately thereafter. **Late bids shall not be accepted.**

Prospective bidders shall signify conformance to the bidding terms and conditions, as required, and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution. Source of funding is from Internal Cash Generation of PNOC-EDC. All bids should be within the Approved Budget for the Contract in order to qualify.

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation reserves the right to annul the bidding process, to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality in the bids received and to accept such bid which is most advantageous to PNOC-EDC without thereby incurring liability to the affected bidder or bidders or any obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the ground(s) for PNOC-EDC's action.

(PDI--Jan. 25, 2007)

Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee I

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BUSINESS

Gov't generated ₱4B from sale of assets in '06

Lots sold included prime real estate in Japan, IS property

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT last year generated P4.3 billion worth of revenue from its privatization effort, as it stepped up its aggressive disposal of state-owned assets to boost income and trim the budget deficit.

Proceeds of privatization last year exceeded the original P500-million target set under the fiscal program for 2006, and the P2-billion forecast set in the middle of the year.

The P4.3-billion in revenue last year was likewise the highest amount generated from the privatization effort since 2001.

Privatization revenues reflected in the government's fiscal report for a given period, includes mostly partial payments for sold state-owned assets, which was remitted to the Bureau of the Treasury.

The Arroyo administration has intensified the government's privatization effort as a means to generate more revenue and give up businesses that are expected to do better in the hands of the private sector.

Big-ticket government assets sold last year included the former Manila gas property, the former property of the International School, real estate properties in Nampeidai in Japan, and the state's shares in Maynilad Water Services Inc.

The government sold the former International School property to Century Properties Inc. for P1.432 billion after six years. The former IS property measures 48,832 square meters, and is considered a prime lot, situated near the central business district of Makati City.

The government likewise sold the former Manila Gas property in Manila to Robinsons Land for P574 million.

State-owned shares in Maynilad were also sold for $57 million. The former water concessionaire was sold to the consortium of DMCI Holdings and Metro Pacific.

The government expects to generate much more from the privatization effort this year, when more major state-owned asset are expected to be sold.

Under the government's 2007 fiscal program, the targeted income was set at P25.6 billion.

The target is a conservative estimate, especially if the government is able to sell the assets up for grabs this year.

Other assets lined up for privatization include: television stations RPN-9 and IBC-13, Al-Amanah Islamic Bank, Philippine Postal Corp., and government shares in Philippine Telecommunications Investment Corp., San Miguel Corp., and Manila Electric Co.

On the sale of its 46-percent stake in PTIC, the government expects to generate as much as P25.2 billion. The sale of PTIC alone would allow the government to reach its target revenue from privatization for this year.

A bidding was earlier conducted for the PTIC shares, and Parallax Venture Fund submitted the highest bid of P25.2 billion.

LIFE ON THE SLOW LANE A girl sells ripe mangos under the Sta Mesa bridge in Manila. Romulo Neri of the National Economic and Development Authority is urging banks to lend money to small traders so that the economic gains of the country will trickle down to the masses. EDWIN BACASMAS

Pre-bidding for Manila thermal plant draws 9 groups

By Abigail L. Ho

NINE PROSPECTIVE BIDDERS showed up during the pre-bidding conference for the National Power Corp.'s decommissioned 200-megawatt (MW) Manila Thermal Power Plant, providing assurance that the auction for the facility would not be declared a failure for lack of interest.

Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), the agency tasked to privatize Napocor's generation assets, said it was now finalizing the transaction documents for the bidding, which would take place within the first half.

During the pre-bidding conference, PSALM said it discussed the bidding procedures with the interested bidders as well as other concerns such as the bid security, mode of payment, establishment of consortia, and other legal matters.

Manila Thermal, the first retired power plant to be auctioned off following failed biddings for other such plants in 2005, would be sold on an "as is, where is" basis.

Commissioned in 1965, the power facility consisted of two operating units, each with a rated capacity of 100 MW. It was retired in January 2000.

After suffering several failed auctions in 2005, PSALM is now preparing to re-bid Napocor's retired power plants, with Manila Thermal as the test case.

These assets, to be assessed based on their scrap value, include the 225-MW Bataan thermal power plant in Limay, the 22.3-MW General Santos diesel power plant in South Cotabato, the 54-MW Cebu II diesel power plant in Toledo City, and the 108-MW Aplaya diesel power plant in Misamis Oriental.

In an earlier interview, PSALM vice president for asset management and electricity trading Froilan Tampinco said the market now seemed ready for Napocor's decommissioned plants, judging from the interest that the Manila Thermal plant had gotten from prospective investors.

Budget carrier Cebu Pacific sees growth of passenger traffic in '07

By Riza T. Olchondra

IN 2006, CEBU PACIFIC SERVED 3.5 MILlion passengers, 57 percent more than what the airline carried in 2005.

This year, the budget carrier is set to carry more than five million passengers, according to its president and CEO Lance Gokongwei.

The 2005 Ernst and Young's Entrepreneur of the Year Philippines awardee also revealed that Cebu Pacific is set to add another local flight today, and will start flying to Jakarta, Indonesia by the end of the month.

The carrier is also expecting the arrival of its 14th aircraft next month, Gokongwei said.

Cebu Pacific has been aggressively expanding its regional and domestic operations, launching six new regional routes and five new domestic destinations over the past seven months.

Records show that the airline carried 2.2 million passengers with a year-round average load factor of 64 percent in 2005. In 2006, the budget carrier carried 3.5 million passengers with a year-round average load factor of 75 percent.

"With the arrival of our 13th aircraft last week, and our 14th aircraft in February, we will continue opening new routes and serving new destinations," Gokongwei said in a speech at the 4th Low Cost Airline Congress in Singapore on Wednesday. "We start our second daily frequency to Dumaguete on Jan. 25. We are increasing our frequency to South Korea from 10 times weekly to 17 times weekly, and we also start flying to Jakarta by the end of the month."

Now in its 11th year, Cebu Pacific operates 13 brand new Airbus aircraft with an average fleet age of less than a year, to its 20 domestic and seven regional destinations. The airline's $670 million re-fleeting program will be completed next month.

"Today, we have the most domestic destinations, flights and routes," Gokongwei said. "We also offer the lowest fares and operate the youngest fleet in Asia."

BPI sees peso to hit 46:$1, 91-day T-bills slide to 3%

Doris C. Dumlao

THE AYALA GROUP'S BANK OF THE PHILIPpine Islands expects interest rates, based on the benchmark 91-day Treasury bill rate, to further slide to 3 percent this year due to the government's fiscal gains and a financial system that is now awash in cash.

The country's second biggest lender also expects the peso to rally to as high as 46:$1 on rosy macroeconomic prospects, but only if the government can sustain its favorable fiscal position and maintain a stable political environment.

In a press briefing yesterday, BPI president Aurelio Montinola III said the unprecedented slowdown in interest rates, in turn, should spur demand for credit especially among small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and the consumer sector.

"The macroeconomic fundamentals have changed; we've never been in a situation where interest rates are this low," Montinola said. "We're already basically adjusting to a scenario where the T-bills rates are at 3-4 percent range and the options of what to do with the excess liquidity are getting smaller and smaller."

The 91-day T-bill average yield, which banks use in pricing loans, has fallen to an average of 3.795 percent from the previous rate of 4.837 percent during the last auction by the Bureau of Treasury.

Whenever the economy is doing well, as what is currently happening, Montinola believes SMEs are the best clients to lend to, as the growth in top-tier corporations usually lifts the tide for allied industries, especially with the trend towards outsourcing.

"Many of them (SMEs) can now borrow at lending rates lower than 10 percent," Montinola said. "In the past, they're used to borrowing at 15-20 percent. That gives them the extra margin to be able to compete or to invest in systems and capital expenditures."

But while borrowers would be happy, Montinola said, retirees and those living on interest income would struggle.

Montinola said the low local bond yields would not likely encourage a shift away from peso-denominated assets given the generally favorable investor outlook on Asia.

BPI economist Cecilia Tanchoco explained that T-bill rates could stay below the 4 percent level "on assumption of an environment of consistent improvement in public finances, good governance, clean and honest elections and obviously, less volatile oil prices."

Tanchoco, who presented the bank's macroeconomic outlook during the same briefing, said: "We see a steady expansion in GDP (gross domestic product) growth of about 5.5-6 percent. If government can unleash spending and pass a budget, the 6 percent will be easily surpassed."

Assuming that crude prices could hold on to current levels of about $52 per barrel, Tanchoco said inflation could ease to about 4 percent.

Easy pay. Easy pass sa MRT.

RP's first RFID implementation by Globe subsidiary makes it to the 2007 Mobile Innovation Awards

G-Xchange, Inc. (GXI), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Globe Telecom, made the shortlist of international finalists in the Most Innovative Technology Development Category of the GSM Association's (GSMA) prestigious 2007 Global Mobile Awards.

GXI was nominated this year for its pioneering GPass service, the world's first contactless ticketing solution with a mobile leg. GPass lets Globe and TM subscribers wirelessly pay for their MRT3 train fare with just a tap of a wireless Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip. GPass is made even more convenient by its integration with GCash, the revolutionary electronic payment system that won Best Messaging Service at the 2005 GSM Awards.

The integration of GPass with GCash lets subscribers reload their GPass chips through their mobile phones anytime and anywhere. Users also get real-time updates via SMS to confirm transactions and to remind them of their outstanding balance.

GXI president Rizza Maniego-Eala welcomed the nomination as a major achievement for the company as it continues to develop even more groundbreaking m-commerce solutions by making money transfer and micro payment transactions more affordable and accessible to a larger public. "GXI is all about making people's lives better through mobile technology. We feel that this nomination for the 2007 Mobile Innovation Awards shows that we are on the right track," she said.

The six finalists will be presented for judging at the Mobile Innovation Forum in February as part of the 3GSM World Congress, the world's largest annual mobile industry event, which will be held this year in Barcelona, Spain. The prestigious Mobile Innovation Awards is a venue for small, young, and upstart companies to present their ideas to leading industry investors and mobile operators via a high-profile international event.

GSM GLOBAL MOBILE AWARDS 07 NOMINEE

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WHAT'S INSIDE
Consumers ask: Who will enforce regulations in Metro Manila? /C3

LIFESTYLE
Editor Chelo Banal-Formoso
sms feedback: inquirer life name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) and 386 (Smart) or email us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

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MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS ◎ TUESDAY FITNESS ◎ WEDNESDAY 2BU ◎ THURSDAY FOOD ◎ FRIDAY FASHION & BEAUTY

KITCHEN RESCUE
Reggie Aspiras

My favorite places for comfort

THERE IS PERHAPS NO OTHER CITY IN THE world where restaurants mushroom like they do in Manila. We wonder how they all survive.

Survival depends on many things and, if I were to predict, there are two that are here to stay, Duo and Kök.

The dynamic duo behind Duo are chef Mauro Arjona and partner Larry Cortez who provide not just good food but impeccable service.

Though I dined al fresco, there was never a moment when a waiter was not in sight. Impressive indeed!

And things just kept getting better. When they served their *bonete* bread, I could have just sat there perfectly satisfied eating only that. It was served warm and the first piece I put in my mouth just melted. It was by itself a gustatory experience.

But one can't live on bread alone so I searched the menu, wanting the sheer comfort a good meal brings. At the end of the day, I crave simple food so I asked for steak Tagalog.

Needless to say, I was completely satisfied. Apparently, at Duo, everything melts in your mouth. And that is a compliment!

The steak was so tender. The fried eggplant and that special relish they serve of bell peppers, ingested in one perfect bite, give the dish a heightened sensation of flavors and textures. A true hand and glove combination.

For those who love steaks, Duo should be on your list of must-dine in places.

Unfortunately, I only have a pit to fill and there seems so many interesting things on the menu. I find solace in the thought that there will be a next time.

Duo is at Serendra, The Fort. Call 8561200 or 8561300.

Swede name, Asian food

Kök means kitchen in Swedish. Peculiar that they serve Asian food. Must be because Kök sounds like wok!

My friend Kevin Tan and I had a most wonderful time trying restaurateur Joshua Tiu's dishes. Tiu, by the way, also owns Zong at The Fort.

Kök is a place you would go to when you're out of options. The menu is a mix of Asian comfort food... little unassuming dishes that are just downright delicious, devoid of all the "baubles." Tasty somehow does not quite describe them. I think *malinamnam* is more apt.

I find the chicken nuggets in red egg delicious, crunchy with subtle hints of that distinct flavor that could only be of salted eggs, served with a sweet sauce. The braised beef *tapa* is equally yummy, tender chunks of beef with a delightful tinge of sweetness and spice topped with fried garlic. And so delicate is the fresh tofu with sauteed chicken.

The magic of good food lies in the capacity of the cook to create as many complementary flavors and textures in a dish. Achieving the sensations, attaining the perfect balance, executing a dish with full bursts of flavor that blend perfectly together are what separate the pros from the amateurs.

The rule applies to all dishes, from the most simple to the most complex.

Duo and Kök do just that!

Searching

Where on earth does one get *hemin* bread or how does one qualify to be a recipient?

DANNY MARAMBA, erstwhile food columnist of Manila Times and Manila Standard

RESTAURATEUR Joshua Tiu

CHEF Mauro Arjona

Mr. Maramba, it's an honor to be read by you!

To answer your question, I think you must find someone who thinks you worthy of being bestowed with good wishes. The literature says it must be given to someone good. I qualified because my friend had the starter—not by merit!

Update: Got my *hemin* a few days after I wrote about it and did not do anything! Ramon Rodriguez of the Philippine Center for St. Pio of Pietrelcina will be pleased. He forwarded to me a letter from Fr. Aldo Broccato, Ministro Provinciale OFM Cap.

"We must warn you in the Philippines, as it has already been happening in Italy, that in the name of St. Pio come proposals disguised as sweets from St. Pio. They are all false! Do not be tricked or fooled!

"We the Capuchin Friars of San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy, deplore these initiatives that have no connection with the faith, and so we invite you to refuse whichever false proposals are strongly made to you in the name of St. Pio, from topics not in accord with the directives of our friary."

Naku, sorry! Bless us, Father, for we have sinned...

E-mail the author at raspiras@inquirer.com.ph

DUO'S Steak Tagalog with Fried Eggplant

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Marcos Hi-Way
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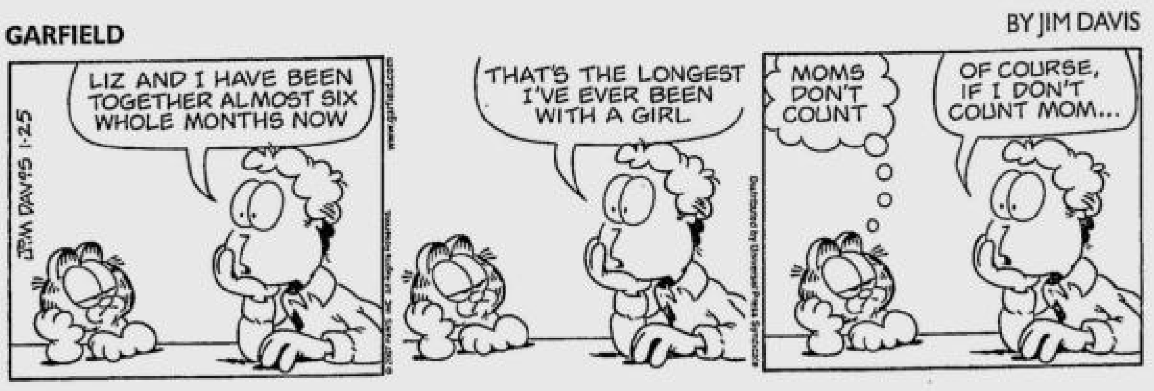
PASAY ROAD: Eleanor 887 35 30 / 0915 689 30 88
PASIG: Jihan / Gladys 647 38 16 / 0915 309 46 23
SM NORTH: Mitch 929 54 29

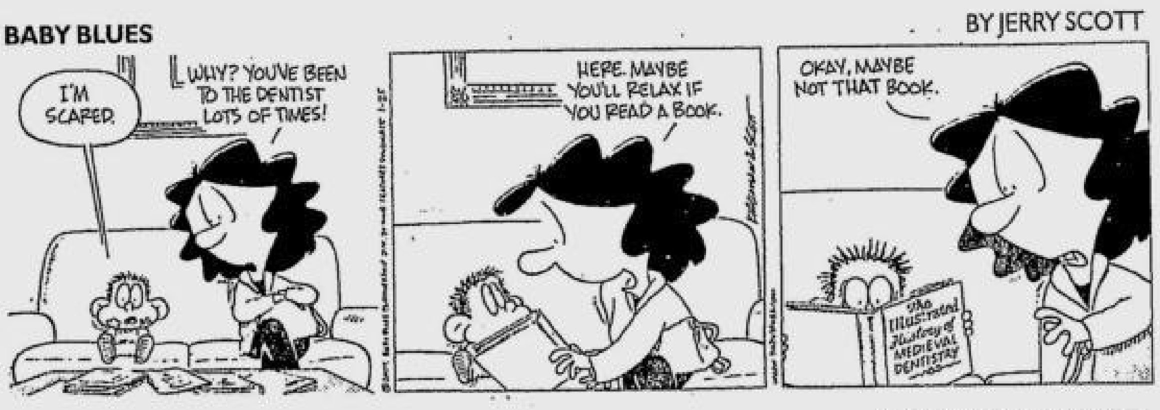
GARFIELD

BY JIM DAVIS


JIM DAVIS 1-25
LIZ AND I HAVE BEEN TOGETHER ALMOST SIX WHOLE MONTHS NOW
THAT'S THE LONGEST I'VE EVER BEEN WITH A GIRL
MOMS DON'T COUNT
OF COURSE, IF I DON'T COUNT MOM...

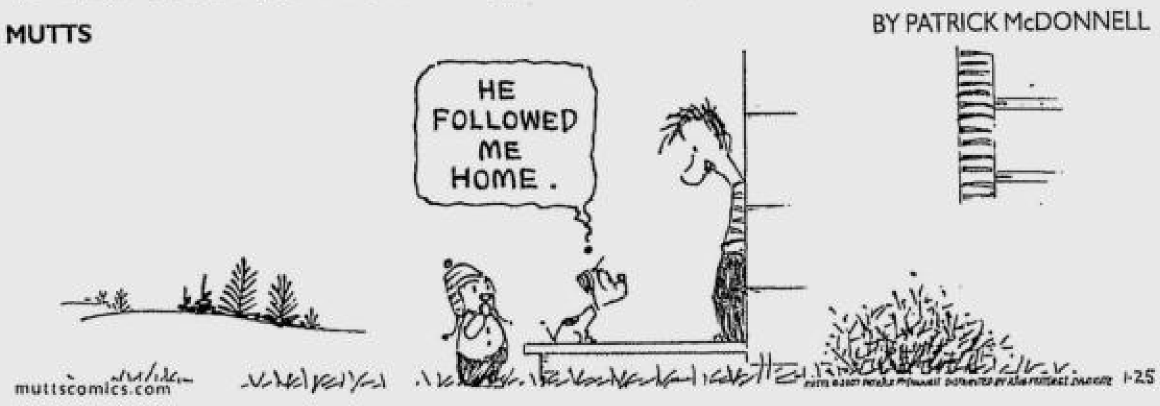
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


I'M SCARED.
WHY? YOU'VE BEEN TO THE DENTIST LOTS OF TIMES!
HERE. MAYBE YOU'LL RELAX IF YOU READ A BOOK.
OKAY, MAYBE NOT THAT BOOK.
The Illustrated History of MEDIEVAL DENTISTRY

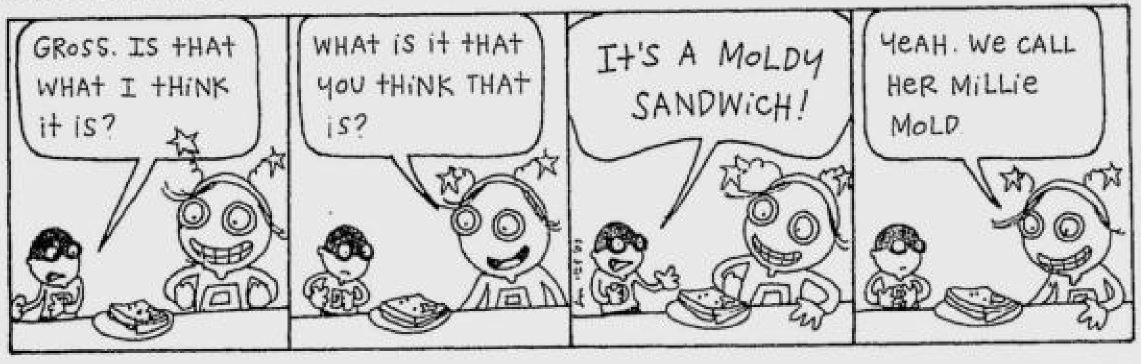
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


HE FOLLOWED ME HOME.
muttscomics.com
1-25

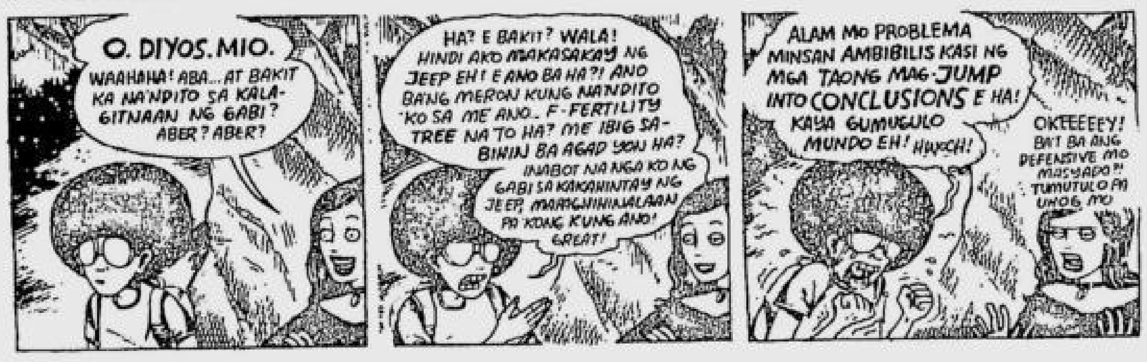
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


GROSS. IS THAT WHAT I THINK IT IS?
WHAT IS IT THAT YOU THINK THAT IS?
IT'S A MOLDY SANDWICH!
YEAH. WE CALL HER MILLIE MOLD

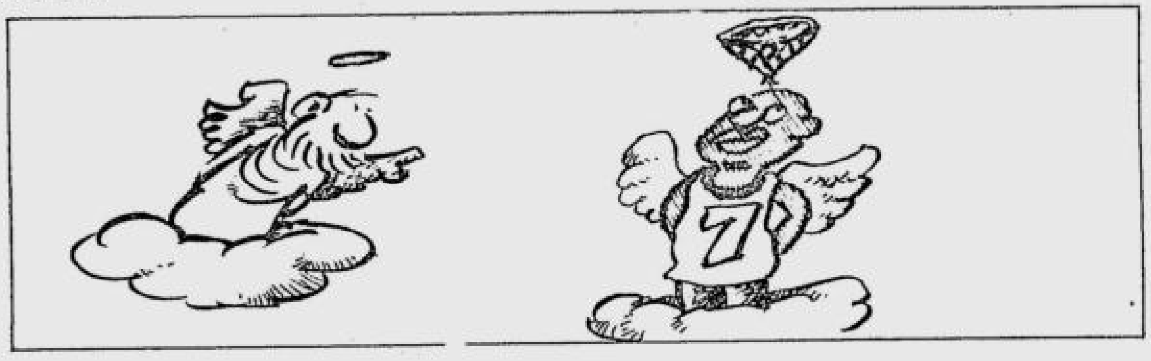
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


O. DIYOS. MIO.
WAAHAHA! ABA...AT BAKIT KA NA'NDITO SA KALAGITNAAN NG GABI? ABER? ABER?
HA? E BAKIT? WALA! HINDI AKO MAKASAKAY NG JEEP EH! E ANO BA HA?! ANO BANG MERON KUNG NANDITO 'KO SA ME ANO.. F-FERTILITY TREE NA 'TO HA? ME IBIG SABIHIN BA AGAD YON HA?
INABOT NA NGA KO NG GABI SA KAKAHINTAY NG JEEP, MAPAGHINALAAN PA KONG KUNG ANO! GREAT!
ALAM MO PROBLEMA MINSAN AMBIBILIS KASI NG MGA TAONG MAG-JUMP INTO CONCLUSIONS E HA! KAYA GUMUGULO MUNDO EH! HMPCH!
OKEEEEEY! BA'T BA ANG DEFENSIVE MO MASYADO?! TUMUTULO PA UHOG MO

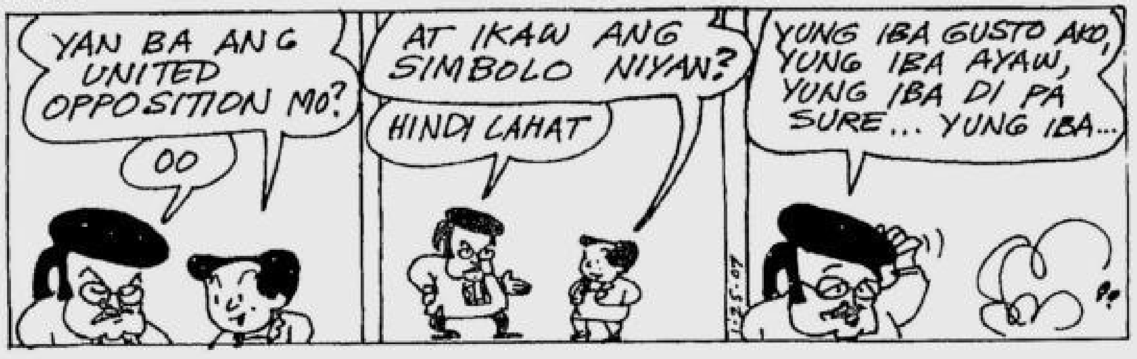
TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING



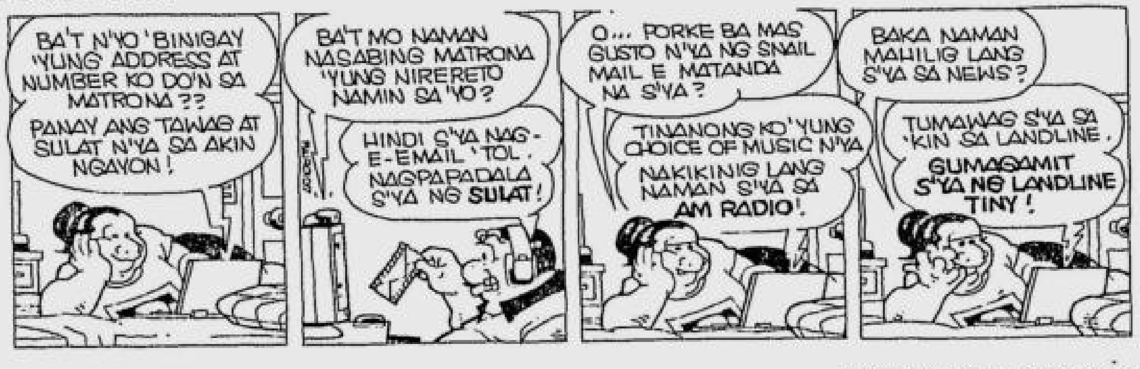
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


YAN BA ANG UNITED OPPOSITION MO?
OO
AT IKAW ANG SIMBOLO NIYAN?
HINDI LAHAT
YUNG IBA GUSTO AKO, YUNG IBA AYAW, YUNG IBA DI PA SURE... YUNG IBA...

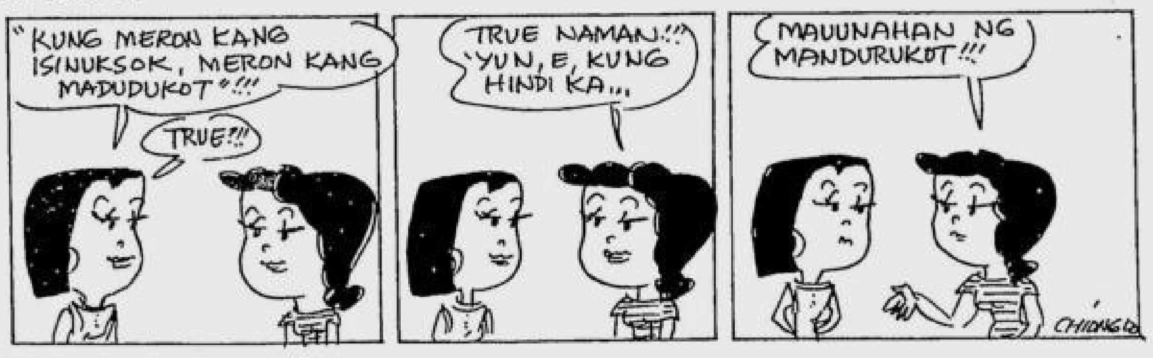
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


BA'T N'YO 'BINIGAY 'YUNG ADDRESS AT NUMBER KO DO'N SA MATRONA??
PANAY ANG TAWAG AT SULAT N'YA SA AKIN NGAYON!
BA'T MO NAMAN NASABING MATRONA 'YUNG NIRERETO NAMIN SA 'YO?
HINDI S'YA NAG-E-EMAIL 'TOL. NAGPAPADALA S'YA NG SULAT!
O... PORKE BA MAS GUSTO N'YA NG SNAIL MAIL E MATANDA NA S'YA?
TINANONG KO 'YUNG CHOICE OF MUSIC N'YA
NAKIKINIG LANG NAMAN S'YA SA AM RADIO!
BAKA NAMAN MAHILIG LANG S'YA SA NEWS?
TUMAWAG S'YA SA 'KIN SA LANDLINE.
GUMAGAMIT S'YA NG LANDLINE TINY!

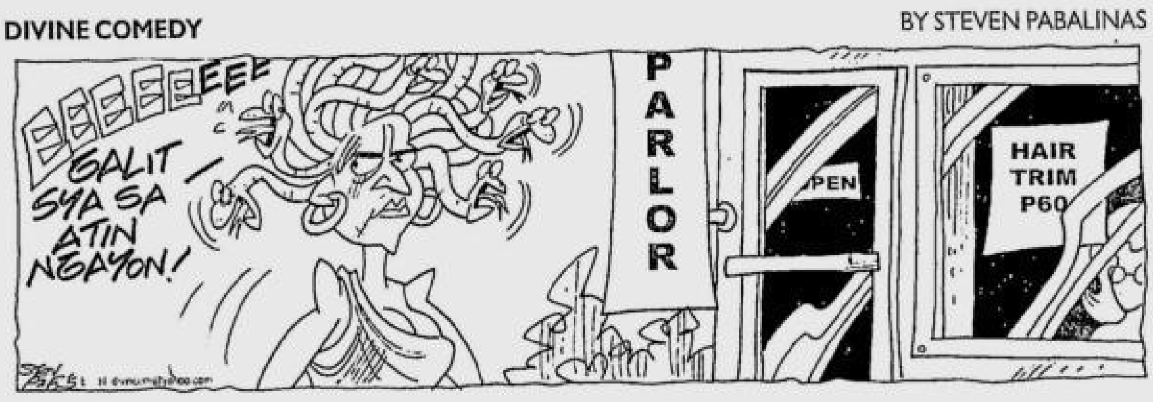
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


"KUNG MERON KANG ISINUKSOK, MERON KANG MADUDUKOT"!!!
TRUE!!!
TRUE NAMAN!!! 'YUN, E, KUNG HINDI KA...
MAUUNAHAN NG MANDURUKOT!!!
CHIONGLO

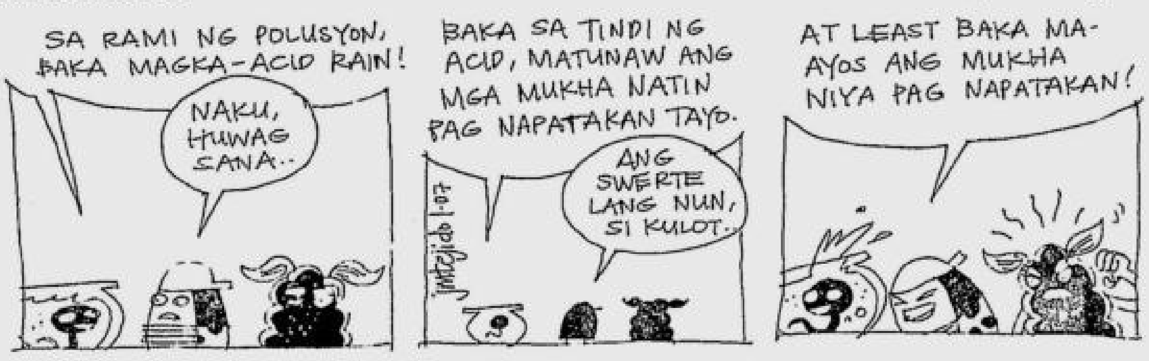
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


EEEEEEEEEE
GALIT SYA SA ATIN NGAYON!
PARLOR
PEN
HAIR TRIM P60

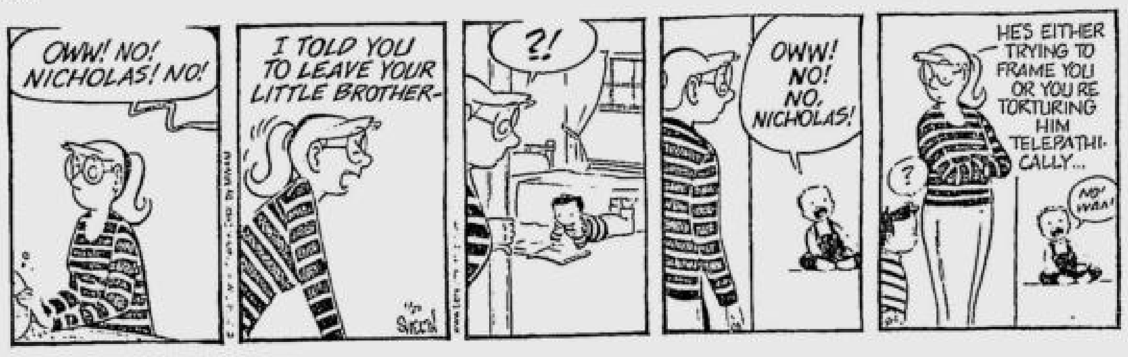
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO

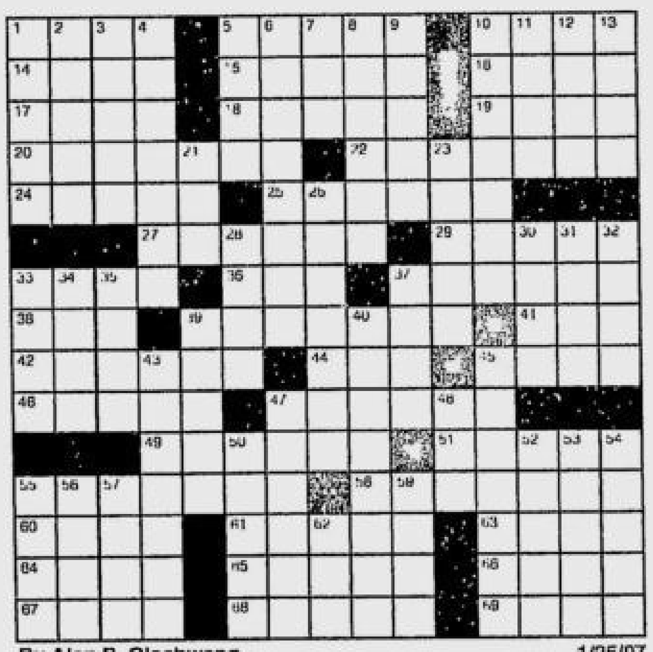

SA RAMI NG POLUSYON, BAKA MAGKA-ACID RAIN!
NAKU, HUWAG SANA..
BAKA SA TINDI NG ACID, MATUNAW ANG MGA MUKHA NATIN PAG NAPATAKAN TAYO.
ANG SWERTE LANG NUN, SI KULOT.
AT LEAST BAKA MAAYOS ANG MUKHA NIYA PAG NAPATAKAN!

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


OWW! NO! NICHOLAS! NO!
I TOLD YOU TO LEAVE YOUR LITTLE BROTHER-
?!
OWW! NO! NO, NICHOLAS!
HE'S EITHER TRYING TO FRAME YOU OR YOU'RE TORTURING HIM TELEPATHICALLY...
?
NO! WAA!

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Alan P. Olschwang
Huntington Beach, CA
1/25/07

ACROSS

1 Weighty plop
5 Larger-than-life stories
10 Animal hide
14 Sari wearer
15 Soup server
16 Pitcher Tiant
17 Env. additions
18 Man from Manila or Manchuria
19 Environs
20 Start of Evan Esar quip
22 Part 2 of quip
24 Prepare to take notice?
25 Prepare for return
27 Bread seed
29 Tears
33 Polka followers
36 Little devil
37 Resident-to-be
38 Hula instrument
39 Part 3 of quip
41 Honolulu garland
42 Formulated beliefs
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47 Convincing
49 __ Nevada
51 Sentence subjects
55 Part 4 of quip
58 End of quip
60 Bring up
61 Open courtyards
63 Indigenous people of Japan
64 Spy Hari
65 Mary Poppins, e.g.
66 Hoof sound
67 Lone guy
68 Hitches
69 British pianist Myra

DOWN

1 Low cards
2 Vietnam capital
3 Completely intact
4 Talk over
5 Distinctive flair
6 Deli offering
7 Amin of Uganda
8 Contract component
9 Have a gut feeling
10 Short theatrical offering
11 Continental change
12 In __ of
13 Romanov ruler
21 Orangutan or gibbon
23 Merits
26 Sovereign ruler
28 Gentlemen
30 Jodie Foster film
31 Three, in Berlin
32 Clip
33 Conduit
34 Gumbo veggie
35 Abound
37 At rest
39 Leaflike layers
40 Making invalid
43 Washcloth
45 Belly
47 Iraklion resident
48 Vane dir.
50 Dale of oaters
52 Functional
53 Taboos
54 Liquid courses
55 Shirtsleeves
56 Spick-and-span
57 Items of information
59 "Airplane!" star Robert
62 Genetic letters

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

N	O	M	E		A	M	P	S		D	A	M	O	N
O	P	E	D		N	O	E	L		E	D	I	N	A
D	A	N	A		C	O	R	A		C	A	R	E	S
	H	U	M	P	H	R	E	Y	B	O	G	A	R	T
				R	O	E			R	Y	E			
P	A	S	T	O	R		T	I	A	S		P	A	L
A	S	T	R	O		S	A	R	I		S	I	B	I
T	H	E	A	F	R	I	C	A	N	Q	U	E	E	N
T	E	E	M		A	M	I	N		U	N	C	L	E
I	N	N		E	D	I	T		S	A	T	E	E	N
			A	L	I			A	A	R				
T	H	E	C	A	I	N	E	M	U	T	I	N	Y	
B	A	L	M	Y		O	M	A	R		M	O	S	T
A	L	L	E	N		T	I	N	E		I	L	E	R
R	E	E	S	E		E	T	A	L		T	O	R	Y

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1/25/07

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You have a marvelous imagination and the talent to use it. (Some of you have geniuslike ideas.) Many of you are writers or wordsmiths. You have high ideals and strong beliefs, and you wish to share these with others. You have much to look forward to in 2007, because this might be one of the best years of your life!
Birthdate of: Mia Kirshner, actress; Alicia Keys, singer; Robert Burns, poet.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You won't regret seeing a friend today, because you feel true affection for someone right now. For some reason, this friendship is very important to you today.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Today you feel keen to get the approval of a boss, a parent or some authority figure who is important to you. We all feel this way at times

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Travel opportunities could be exciting right now. Conversations about politics or religion are also unusually passionate today. You really believe in something right now

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): This is a fortunate time for you because someone wants to give you a gift or do a favor for you. Let this happen. Privately, intimate relations are very sweet and cozy.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Partnerships are quite intense now. You're very wrapped up in a love affair or a close friendship with someone. Today you can enhance or enrich this relationship

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): You have great ideas about how to make improvements at work. Fortunately, a coworker agrees with you. Do whatever you can.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): New love can blossom for many of you. This is definitely a time of romance and pleasant social relationships with others. Time spent with children will be rewarding.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): A new purchase for your home will please you today. Quite likely, it is something beautiful or luxurious that makes your home more pleasing and attractive

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Conversations with others are intense and vigorous today. You feel unusually passionate about whatever you discuss. For some reason, the stakes are very high right now.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is an excellent day to make money, and it's an excellent day to spend money. If possible, make your financial transactions benefit others as well as yourself.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Some of you will begin an unusually intense relationship right now. It seems as if there is an unusual "fated" quality to it. To know this person feels like it was written in the stars

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Your romantic vibes are hot today! You definitely have a crush on someone. Or maybe someone has a crush on you. All relations with others will be quite intense at this time.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

by Dave Green

	3						5	
7		2	3	1	4	9		8
9								4
			2		3			
		3				2		
			6		5			
6								9
2		7	5	6	9	4		3
	4						1	

Difficulty Level ★★★ 1/25

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

1	3	9	7	8	4	2	6	5
8	7	2	5	3	6	4	1	9
4	5	6	1	9	2	8	3	7
5	2	3	9	7	1	6	8	4
9	4	7	2	6	8	1	5	3
6	1	8	3	4	5	7	9	2
7	6	5	8	2	9	3	4	1
2	8	1	4	5	3	9	7	6
3	9	4	6	1	7	5	2	8

Difficulty Level ★★★

How to make tacos, bagels, cinnamon rolls

THE REGGIE ASPIRAS SCHOOL OF Culinary Arts is conducting the following classes: Jan. 26—Oh Mexico! (all new)—Sirloin Steak Tacos in Soft Tortilla with Guacamole, Beans, Lime and Salsas; Taco Bell-style Chicken Quesadillas, Baja Style Taco de Pescado, Chicken in Mole Sauce Served with Baja-style Rice with Beans, Chorizo Stew Served with Mexican Rice, Tortillas, Condiments; Jan. 27—Cream Cheese (all new)—Artichoke Dip with Mushroom Puffs, Spinach Chicken with Creamy Tomato Rice, Steaks in Creamy Parmesan Sauce with Pasta Primavera, Sole in Roasted Capsicum Sauce, Sinfully Rich Beef Stroganoff with Homemade Pasta Threads, Best Ever White Chocolate Cheesecake with four Fruit Toppings; Jan. 29—Bagel (all new)—Make your own bagel, four kinds—plain, herbed, wheat, cinnamon raisin; dips of Paté with Grape Jam, Smoked Salmon, Corned Beef, Scampi, Parmesan-Tomato; Jan. 31—Cinnamon (all new) '07—Best Ever Sticky Buns, Melt-in-your-mouth Cinnamon Rolls, Mascarpone Cinnamon Rolls, Cinnamon Coffee Rolls, Nut and Raisin Rolls.

Call 9289296, 9273008, 7221691.

THE CONSUMER

Why set rules you cannot enforce?

By Linda B. Bolido

ON A TRIP TO DAVAO, A SMOKER friend immediately lit up as soon as we stepped out of the airport.

Even before she could take her first puff, people were yelling at us from all directions saying smoking was prohibited. My friend argued that she was in open space, not inside a building.

But, apparently, in Davao you can only smoke in private, not in public.

In Puerto Princesa, airplane cabin crew reminds passengers before the plane lands that the city has a very strict anti-littering ordinance. Heavy fines or imprisonment will be imposed on violators.

It is obvious that in both cities, people know that local regulations are not paper tigers. Rules are enforced and violators, even visitors, are punished.

Contrast this with the blatant disregard in Metro Manila of similar ordinances.

You wonder why, for instance, there are still anti-littering signs on streets when people obviously do not take them seriously.

As for anti-smoking regulations, we have to be grateful that at least business establishments are complying with them. Drivers of public utility vehicles do not seem to know they exist.

Drivers of public utility vehicles, including taxis, do not seem to know there are anti-smoking regulations

The other day I even saw a driver smoking inside his air-conditioned cab, without bothering to open the windows.

In Makati City, jeepneys have signs where Mayor Jejomar Binay enjoins everyone "*ilagay sa lugar ang paninigarilyo*." And yet, many of the drivers merrily puff away as they ply their routes.

The situation is worse in other parts of Metro Manila.

And taxi drivers do not seem to realize that in air-conditioned vehicles, the smell of cigarette tends to cling to the upholstery, even if you open the windows.

A taxi driver will even allow a passenger to smoke, sometimes even joining him or her.

And wasn't there a Metro Manila regulation requiring drivers to wear at least clean and proper clothes? Many drivers still look like they jumped straight from bed into their vehicles wearing only their undershirts and without bothering with their morning ablution.

Some even look like they slept in their vehicles and plied their routes as soon as they opened their eyes.

So who is in charge of enforcing rules in Metro Manila? Why can local governments in Davao, Puerto Princesa and other places enforce ordinances while the National Capital Region cannot? Why enact ordinances that you cannot enforce?

Metro Manila local governments may have enacted several good ordinances but, unless they can enforce them, the rules are not worth the paper they are printed on.

Feedback

Rep. Joseph A. Santiago says he will look into the lack of a provision in the Consumer Code on the right of a consumer to return or exchange purchases (Jan. 18 issue). "If necessary, I will propose new legislation hopefully in the next Congress that will open in July."

Consumers' choice

Meanwhile, 2006 was an award-winning year for Citibank Philippines. It was named Outstanding Consumer Bank and Best Consumer Internet Bank, and received the Consumers' Choice Award for Outstanding Products and Services from local and global organizations.

For the third straight year, the country's largest foreign bank was named Best Consumer Internet Bank in the country by the New York-based Global Finance magazine.

Citibank Philippines was also cited as the Most Outstanding Consumer Bank by Consumers' League of the Philippines Foundation Inc. during the 2006 Consumers' Choice Annual Awards.

Then the Consumers Union of the Philippines named it Outstanding Consumer Bank for 2005-2006.

Tip

Here's a suggestion from the book "Gardening Magic" by Joey Green for those having problems with ants.

"Sprinkle Johnson's Baby Powder wherever ants are marching. Ants will not walk through baby powder."

Another suggestion, "Make an impenetrable line with Gold Medal Flour wherever ants are giving you trouble. Ants will not cross through flour."

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1. FEB 5 - 9 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - BASIC CAKE DECORATING - (P11,500 for whole course)
P4,200 - FEB 5 - 6 - Learn 10 diff kinds of icing flowers, figure piping. Bake & decorate your basket weave cake using boiled icing.
P2,850 - FEB 7 - Bake & decorate your own character birthday cake using star tips, simple borders & icing flowers.
P4,750 - FEB 8 - 9 - Wedding cake assembly: Bake & decorate your own 2 tiered wedding cake using fancy borders, scrolls, strings & icing flowers. NEXT SCHED: MAR 5 - 9

2. FEB 12 - 15 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - ADVANCED GUMPASTE & FOREIGN METHOD - (P11,500)
New method on Gumpaste Flowers. Using Mrs. Florendo's Flower Board. Objects, Marzipan, Ribbon Insertion, Finest String Works, Lace Pieces, New Recipe of Fondant & Chocolate Fondant. NEXT SCHED: MAR 12 - 15

3. FEB 17 // 8:00AM - 12:00NN - SUGAR FREE BAKING - (P3,000)
Banana, Apple Almond, Bars, Carrot Cake, Choco Nut Cake, Whole Wheat & Raisin Bread. NEXT SCHED: MAR 17

4. FEB 14 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - NEW METHOD ON FONDANT 2 KINDS - (P5,000)
Using Lace Mats, New Rolling Pin W/ Designs, Swags & Ribbons, Non-Stick boards w/ Flowers & Veiners & Quilling. NEXT SCHED: MAR 14

5. FEB 16 // 8:30 AM - 1:00 PM - NEW CAKES - (P3,000)
Piña Colada, Tres Leches, Mocha Cake w/ egg white mocha icing, Chocolate Cherry Cake NEXT SCHED: MAR 16

6. FEB 19 - 23 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - BASIC COMMERCIAL BAKING - (P13,500. For whole course)
P2,750 - FEB 19 - Cakes: plain, mocha, choco, orange chiffon cakes, pound cake, sponge cake, moist choco cake.
P2,850 - FEB 20 - Cakes & Roll: malacañang roll, chocolate roll, brownies, pineapple upside-down, custard cake, mamon.
P2,850 - FEB 21 - Breads: pan de sal, dinner rolls, buns, pan de coco, ensaymada, honey bread & raisin bread.
P2,950 - FEB 22 - Pies: Buko pie, custard pie, pineapple pie, apple pie, mango pie, caramel tart.
P2,850 - FEB 23 - Pastries & Cookies: almond tart, San Nicolas cookies, camachile, oatmeal cookies, lengua de gato, coconut macaroons. NEXT SCHED: MAR 19 - 23

7. FEB 19 - 23 // 8:00AM - 5:00PM - COLD PORCELAIN FLOWER COURSES WITH PORCELAIN RECIPE - (P5,000)
(Each set is lesson covered for one day) - a) Sampaguita, Sunflower, Waling-waling; b) Rose, Cattleya, Cymbidium; c) Magnolia, Gerbera, Lilies; d) Open Rose, Hydrangeas, Grapes *COLD PORCELAIN DOLLS(P11,000) by appointment* NEXT SCHED: MAR 19 - 23

8. FEB 26 - MAR 2 // 8:00AM - 5:30PM - SPECIAL BAKING - (P14,000. For whole course)
Learn to make 25 Kinds of special cakes from around the world. Each cake has a different icing & decoration.
P3,000 - FEB 26 - All Sponge Cakes: Nelusko cake, Black Forest cake, Decadence cake, Fdn Torte cake, Fruit Torte cake.
P3,000 - FEB 27 - All Chiffon Cakes: Mango cake, Ube cake, Pistachio cake, Rocky Road cake, Coffee Crunch cake.
P3,000 - FEB 28 - All Butter Cakes: Butter Rum cake, Carrot cake, Kahlua cake, Moist Chocolate cake, Special Fruit cake.
P3,000 - MAR 1 - Cheesecakes: Blueberry, Mango, Tiramisu, Cookies & Cream, New York Cheesecake.
P3,000 - MAR 2 - Meringues: Sansrival, Solothurn, Queens Torte, Braso de Mercedez, Pineapple Meringue Pie.
NEXT SCHED: MAR 26 - 30 / FOR SPECIAL SCHEDULE PLS. CALL

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PROMO MECHANICS
A. PROMO PERIOD: JANUARY 1 - MARCH 31, 2007
B. PURCHASE REQUIREMENTS:
1) You can participate in the nationwide raffle promo by submitting the required EQ packs such as EQ Basic (with 100% Breathable Cover and Side Leak Guards), EQ Plus, EQ Colors and EQ Dry (with Cloth-like Cover) in an envelope, together with the information sheet that contains your name, address, contact numbers, signature and your baby's name, birthday and age.
2) Entries may be submitted through a) drop boxes deployed in selected supermarkets/groceries nationwide; b) major Jollibee Party Stores; and, c) mailing or hand-carrying to JSU Office at any of the following branches:
1) JSU MAIN OFFICE
JS Unitrade Merchandise, Inc.
31st Floor Raffles Corporate Center
Emerald Ave., Ortigas Center,
Pasig City 1605
2) JSU CEBU
JS Unitrade Merchandise, Inc. – Cebu
Lot 2 Blk. 9 M.L. Quezon Ave. Castalex
Compound, Cabangcalan, Mandaue City,
Cebu 6014
3) JSU CDO
JS Unitrade Merchandise, Inc. – Warehouse
Kevin Ent. Warehouse Zone 4 Bayabas Road,
Cagayan de Oro City 9000
3) One (1) RAFFLE ENTRY is equivalent to any of the following EQ packs:

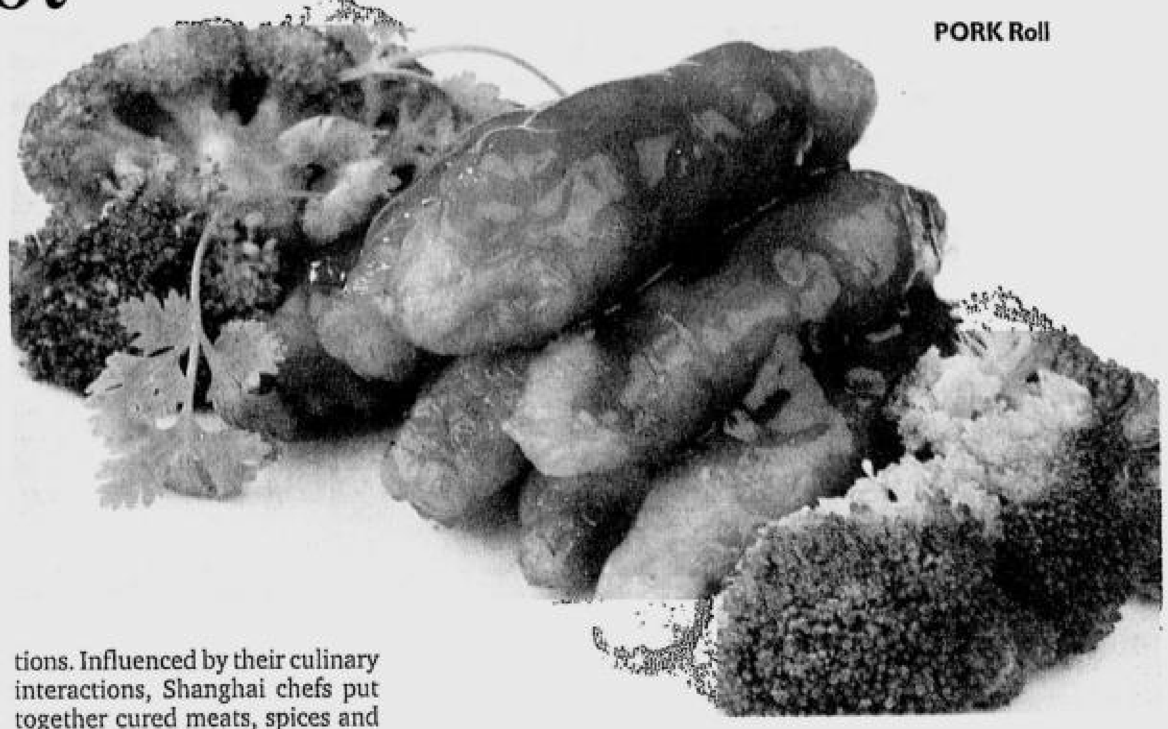
	No. of Packs Required
A. EQ Basic Baby Diapers	
EQ Basic Singles (1)	4
EQ Basic/ EQ Plus Mini Packs (4s)	2
EQ Basic/ EQ Plus Budget Pack (12s)	1
EQ Basic/ EQ Plus Big Pack (36s, 32s, 28s, 24s)	1
B. EQ Colors Baby Diapers	
EQ Colors Mini Packs (4s)	2
EQ Colors Budget Pack (18s, 16s, 14s, 12s)	1
C. EQ Dry Baby Diapers	
EQ Dry Mini Packs (4s)	2
EQ Dry Travel Pack (22s, 20s, 18s, 16s, 14s)	1
EQ Dry Econo Pack (40s, 36s, 32s, 28s)	1
EQ Dry Jumbo Pack (60s, 54s, 48s, 42s)	1
EQ Dry Mega Pack (84s, 72s)	1

4) Each entry should contain the number of corresponding EQ packs. Chosen entry with incomplete number of packs will be disqualified.
C. RAFFLE PRIZES:
Each winner will receive one (1) Jollibee Birthday Party Certificate worth Six Thousand Pesos (P6,000) and one (1) Birthday Party Cake certificate worth Five Hundred Pesos (P500).
D. DRAW SCHEDULES:
1) Entries will be classified into five (5) areas: NCR, North Luzon, South Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao.
2) You are required to drop your entries within the area covered by your mailing address. Otherwise, winning entries will be disqualified. (e.g. 123 Gov. Pack Rd. cor. Upper Session Rd. Baguio City should be submitted at any North Luzon dropbox centers only).
3) Deadline for submission of entries and the corresponding draw dates are as follows:

	Deadline of Submission	Draw Date	No. of Winners
1st Monthly Draw	Jan. 31, 2007	Feb. 9, 2007, 3PM	50 winners
2nd Monthly Draw	Feb. 28, 2007	Mar. 9, 2007, 3PM	50 winners
Grand Draw	Mar. 31, 2007	Apr. 10, 2007, 3PM	100 winners

4) All entries will be drawn at the following JSU Offices at exactly 3 o'clock in the afternoon and will be attended by JSU and DTI representatives.
a) For GMA and Luzon Entries - JSU Pasig Warehouse
b) For Visayas Entries - JSU Cebu
c) For Mindanao Entries - JSU CDO
5) For the 1st and 2nd Monthly Draws, 10 Free Birthday Party Packages will be given in each of the 5 areas (i.e., GMA, South Luzon, North Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao). For the Grand Draw, 20 Free Birthday Party Packages will be given per area.
6) Promo participants can only win once within the entire promo duration. Non-winning entries in the 1st and 2nd Monthly Draws will still be included in the Grand Draw.
7) Entries thru mail will only be accepted until the following date and time for each draw.
a) 1st Draw: February 8, 2007, 5PM b) 2nd Draw: March 8, 2007, 5PM
c) Grand Draw: April 10, 2007, 9AM
E. CLAIMING OF PRIZES:
1) Winners in each draw will be announced in major broadsheets.
2) Within a week after each draw, all winners will be informed through a NOTIFICATION LETTER which will be delivered straight to their houses through Worklink. Worklink will present all the acknowledgement receipts to JSU.
3) Winners can claim their Jollibee birthday party certificates from February 8, 2007 to October 31, 2007 at any of the specified JSU offices near their location.
a) After the redemption period, JSU will mail the prizes through courier.
b) Said service partner shall present the acknowledgement receipts to JSU.
4) Winners will be asked to present their notification letter plus 2 valid IDs for verification purposes.
5) Winners can use their birthday party certificates at their chosen Jollibee party store from February 8, 2007 to December 31, 2008 only.
6) Prizes are transferable but not convertible to cash.
7) Employees of UNITRADE and JOLLIBEE, its advertising agencies and suppliers, including their relatives up to second degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from joining the Raffle Promo.
Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4960, Series of 2006.

Shanghai cuisine is a hot pot of culinary influences


PORK Roll

By Miguel Escaño
Contributor

ALCOHOL AND sugar, two main ingredients in Shanghai cooking, embody the personality of Shanghai Bistro.

Spirited and vibrant, Shanghai cuisine invites lovers of Chinese cooking to embrace familiar recipes fused with exotic, refreshing flavors and modern culinary techniques.

Shanghai Bistro recently celebrated its third anniversary with "Shanghai Festival." The event was held at the Shanghai Bistro branch at City Walk 2 in Eastwood City. It featured a dinner buffet unveiling new additions to the restaurant's menu, a Chinese cultural performance with dancing lions and twirling fan dancers, and a fireworks display.

"Majority of restaurants in Metro Manila serve Cantonese food. Shanghai cuisine has its own unique flavor. For the best place in Shanghai cuisine, you should come to us at Shanghai Bistro," says Elizabeth de Jesus, chief operating officer.

Authentic

Shanghai Bistro owes its authentic cuisine to executive chef Wong Kam On and dim sum chef Daniel Leung, both from Hong Kong. Wong has 18 years of experience as a chef for a number of Hong Kong's best hotels and restaurants. Leung, on the other hand, has been a dim sum chef for 17 years.

For Shanghai dishes that are not readily locally available, Leung says: "Since we don't want to compromise the authentic taste of our recipes, we import spices and preserved vegetables from China, like the *suy choi*, to ensure that the flavor stays true to its roots."

Wong, who has worked in the Philippines for 13 years, says: "Cooking for Filipinos has always been enjoyable for us, since we know that most Filipino diners love Chinese cuisine."

After three years, Shanghai Bistro continues to impress, helping set the standard for authentic Chinese cuisine.

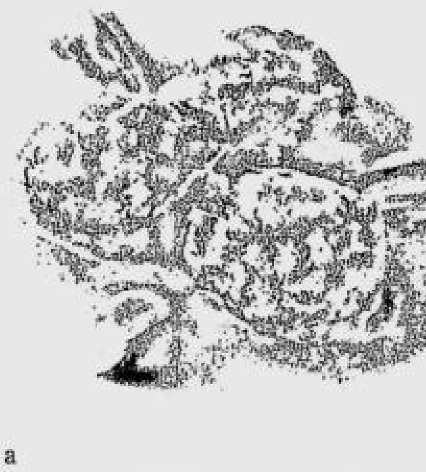
In 2005, it was named No. 1 Authentic Chinese Cuisine Restaurant in the National Shoppers Choice Awards.

Owned and operated by Asia Finest Cuisine, Inc., Shanghai Bistro has a second branch at the Paseo Center in Makati City.

New additions

Like Hong Kong, Shanghai is a melting pot of cultures and traditions. Influenced by their culinary interactions, Shanghai chefs put together cured meats, spices and vegetables to create dishes that are soothing in the winter and refreshing in the summer.

> Like the city, the cuisine continues to grow and develop through interactions with cooking traditions from all over the globe


MEATBALLS Shanghai Style

Its evolving cuisine mirrors the city's dynamic pace. Shanghai is the most progressive and fastest-growing city in China. Like the city, the cuisine continues to grow and develop through interactions with culinary traditions from all over the globe.

Shanghai cuisine is actually a late addition to China's culinary landscape. For a long time, Shanghai did not have a definitive cuisine of its own but simply refined those from surrounding provinces.

When it developed its own, alcohol and sugar became the hallmarks of Shanghai cuisine. Spirits are poured over fish, eel, crab and chicken to the point of "drunkenness," then usually served raw. Sugar, often used in combination with soy sauce, imbues dishes with a savory and perky taste.

Diners unaccustomed to Shanghai cooking usually fail to recognize the use of sugar. They are often surprised to learn what the secret ingredient is.

A typical example of Shanghai cooking is Steamed Crab in Shao Sing Wine. Tung Po Pork is the quintessential Chinese dish. Chinese culinary tradition dictates that fat should complement, not hinder, any dish. The cook first marinates the pork belly in dark soy sauce. The pork is then deep-fried and steamed with special sauces. Traditionally served with green vegetables and a bun, the result is meat so succulent and fat so flavorful that it competes with the best *lechon* Cebu.

As for sugar, the most well-known dish in the sweet tradition is sweet-and-sour spare ribs.

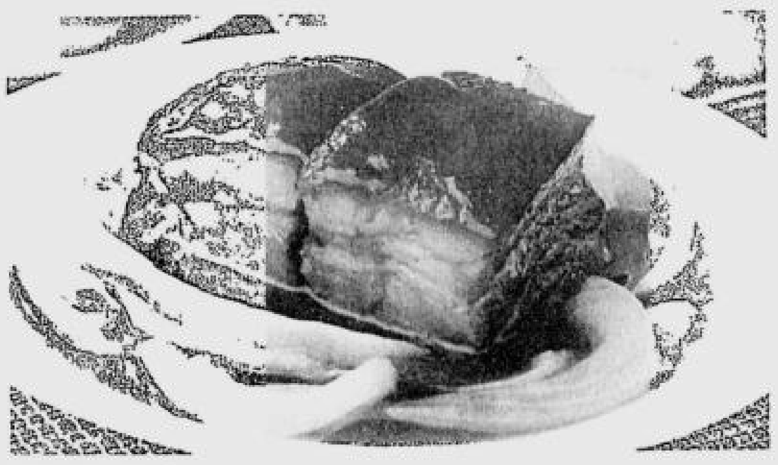
Wubsi Pork Ribs is a zestier version of the traditional sweet-and-sour variety. Pork ribs are braised in a flavorful mix of white vinegar, tomato sauce, brown sugar, and sweet-and-sour sauce. The ribs are braised in an oven until they are tender to the bone.

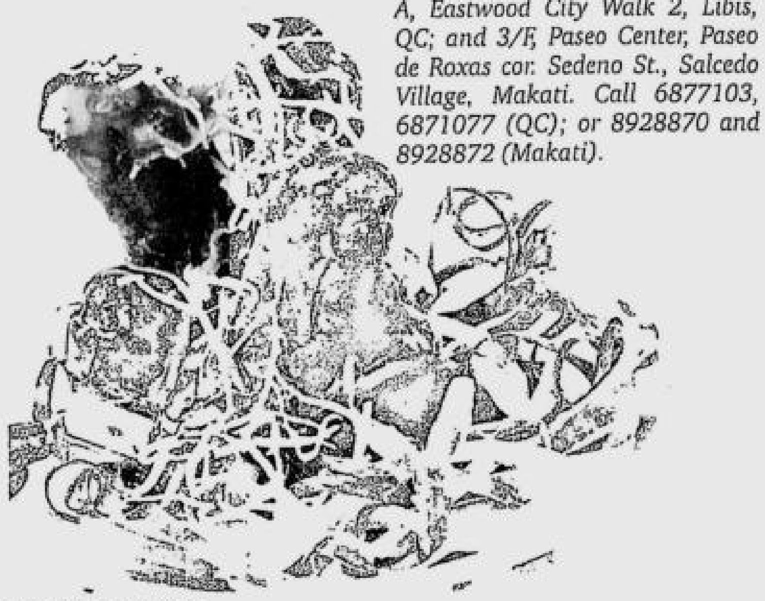
These dishes which are representative of Shanghai's cuisine are now offered at Shanghai Bistro.

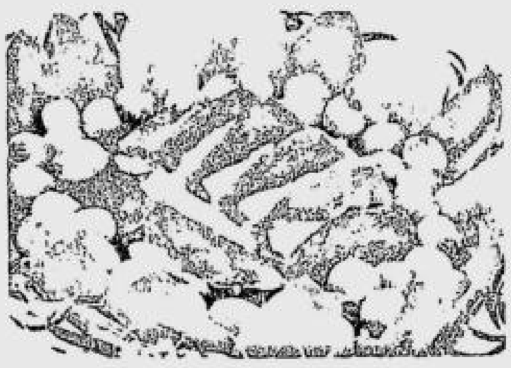
In addition to Steamed Crab in Shao Wing Wine, Tung Po Pork and Wubsi Pork Ribs, the restaurant also unveiled during the anniversary celebration other new dishes like Pork Rolls topped with King Dao Sauce, Meatballs Shanghai-Style, Sweet Ham with Lotus Seeds, Crispy Duck Breast with Plum Sauce, Stir-fried Egg White with Seafood, Shanghai Fried Noodles, Seafood Fried Noodles, Screaming Eel in Gravy, Stuffed Bailing Mushroom with Minced Shrimp and Toffee Banana dessert.

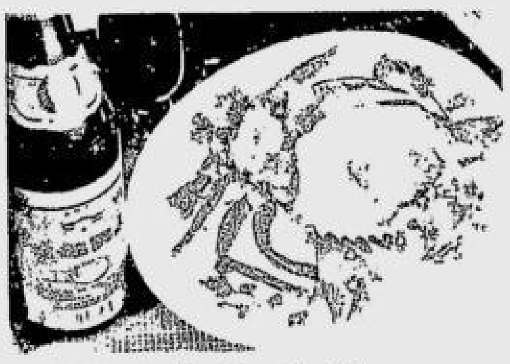
Shanghai Bistro is at G/F, Bldg. A, Eastwood City Walk 2, Libis, QC; and 3/F, Paseo Center, Paseo de Roxas cor. Sedeno St., Salcedo Village, Makati. Call 6877103, 6871077 (QC); or 8928870 and 8928872 (Makati).

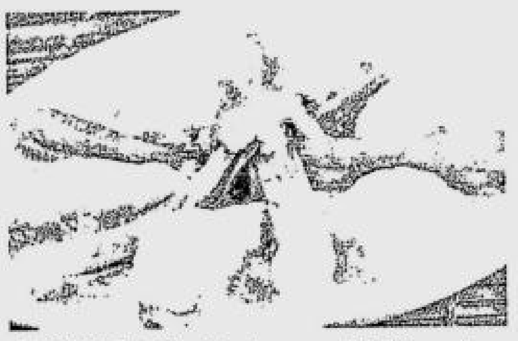
SHANGHAI Bistro at Eastwood City Walk 2


TUNG Po Pork


WUBSI Pork Ribs


SWEET Ham with Lotus Seeds


STEAMED Crab in Shao Sing Wine


STUFFED Bailing Mushroom with Minced Shrimp

COUNTRY COOKING
Micky Fenix

The next generation

SOME BUSINESSES HAVE become institutions that the history of the town or city where they are located would be incomplete without them.

When they disappear, we mourn their passing and wonder why the next generation is not interested in continuing the family tradition.

The two bakeries featured here still operate to this day. We are heartened by the interest and efforts of those who have inherited the business. They know the value of keeping their *panaderia* going despite the invasion by new bakeshops with trendier products.

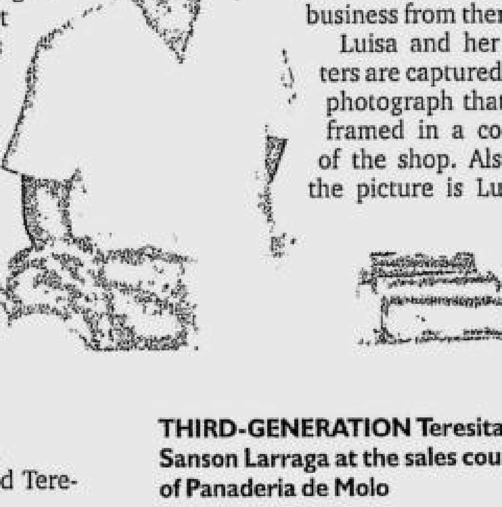
Teresita Sanson Larraga stood under a styrofoam sign that read "Las Nietas de Luisa, Inc." It means "granddaughters of Luisa." But she is Luisa's daughter and she still runs the front shop of Panaderia de Molo, the oldest bakery in Iloilo.

Las Nietas is the corporate name of the bakery that has been in operation for more than a hundred years. I interviewed Teresita almost 10 years ago for a book. She said then that the first generation owners were the Jason sisters, most of whom were unmarried and so, understandably, had the time to create the Spanish biscuits that the bakery was still producing—*hojaldres, galletas, biscocho principe, rosquillos, kinihad*.

Teresita said there were some earthen jars found in the backyard. She thinks biscuits were stored in those jars and the covering of dried banana leaves kept the baked items crisp.

Luisa Jason Sanson belonged to the second Jason generation. Before her were three spinster aunts—Soledad, Marciana and Natividad—who belonged to a brood of about 20. They adopted Luisa who inherited the business from them.

Luisa and her sisters are captured in a photograph that lay framed in a corner of the shop. Also in the picture is Luisa's husband.


THIRD-GENERATION Teresita Sanson Larraga at the sales counter of Panaderia de Molo

Incorporated

When the third generation took over, Luisa's daughters Teresita and Solita Sanson Gaona made Panaderia de Molo a corporation.

Luisa has only two granddaughters, the Gaona sisters, Kristine and Georgina. They are the fourth generation.

The sisters were waiting for me in the innermost part of the bakery. Georgina or Chila sat at a table near time cards, which indicated her responsibilities in the business. Kristine is a doctor who also works to preserve Iloilo historical houses. You know then that both *nietas* will not let the *panaderia* die.

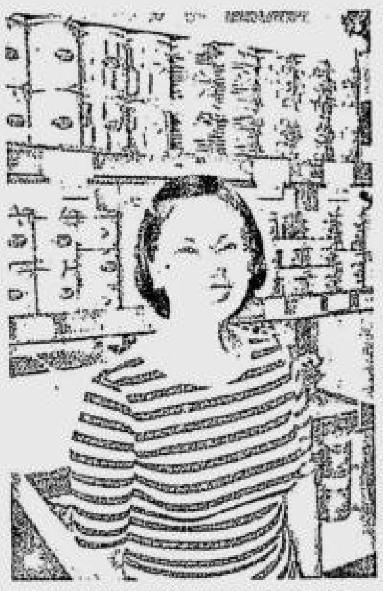
The action was rather muted near lunch at the bakery proper, a huge place that looked like a warehouse. Workers were forming the *rosquillos* some of which lay on a huge *bilao*.

The oven had finished with the baking. Oil had been extracted from the pork fat.

In one corner, the *barquillos* maker went on silently with her work, pouring the mixture on something that looked like a waffle-maker. After the mixture was cooked, she expertly turned each piece into tube shapes.

For over a hundred years, the bakery has been churning out those cookies, which were packed in round tin cans that were so identified with the *panaderia*. Unfortunately, the *panaderia* does not make the tin cans anymore.

Kristine said the tin sheet suppliers required a sizable minimum order so that part of the capital would have been tied up in those sheets in storage. The decision was dictated by the market. Other changes, however, will have to be decided by the corporation.


CORAZON "Butchie" Narciso Lagman at the display area of Panaderia La Moderna in Guagua, Pampanga

THE GRANDDAUGHTERS of Luisa Sanson: Georgina and Kristine Sanson Gaona in front of the wood-fired oven of Panaderia de Molo

Son and daughter

While in Panaderia de Molo only the next generation of women are involved in the business, a son and a daughter continue the work in another bakery thousands of miles up north.

La Panaderia Moderna in Guagua, Pampanga is today run by the third generation of Narcisos, particularly Toto and Corazon "Butchie" Narciso Lagman.

La Moderna began 60 years ago, in 1947, when Pablo Narciso and his wife, Narcisa Carlos, transferred the bakery from Sta. Rita town to Guagua. But it was their parents, Ignacio and Maria Lansang Narciso, who started the bakery in Sta. Rita, the town just across the highway.

Butchie Lagman showed us around the bakery after preparing lunch, a great spread that included fat crabs, stuffed *ampalaya, bringhe* and *bangus sinigang* soured by guava. Our dessert was a sampling of bakery sweets of *empanaditas*, sans rival, *silvanas* and *turrones de casuy*.

The bakery's first floor has the display area for finished products as well as the work area at the back. Butchie introduced us to the employees many of whom had been working there for years.

One was packing *sampaguitas*; flower-shaped white cookies. The *turrones de casuy* were being wrapped in edible paper. On one table was the mold for San Nicolas cookies bearing the image of San Nicolas Tolentino, patron of children. In a bowl, several egg yolks were being bathed with *dayap* zest.

Butchie is one of 10 children and so the next generation will mean so many of them can take over. Her daughters Aileen, Anne and Aimee help their mother at the Salcedo Market in Makati on Saturdays.

It's Aimee, a recent graduate of hotel and restaurant management, who is now active in the bakery. Angelo Songco, son of Butchie's eldest sister Linda, uses his experience in public relations to promote the bakery.

E-mail the author at pinoyfood 04@yahoo.com.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor **Emmie G. Velarde**

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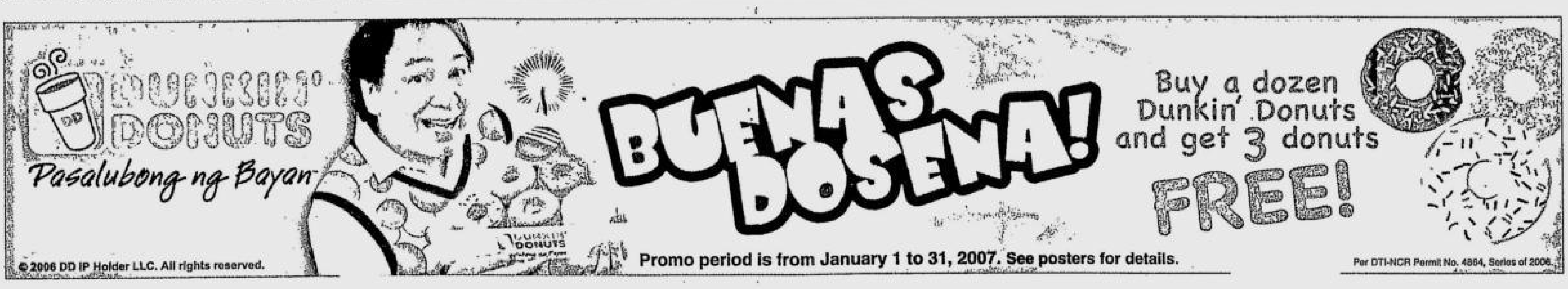

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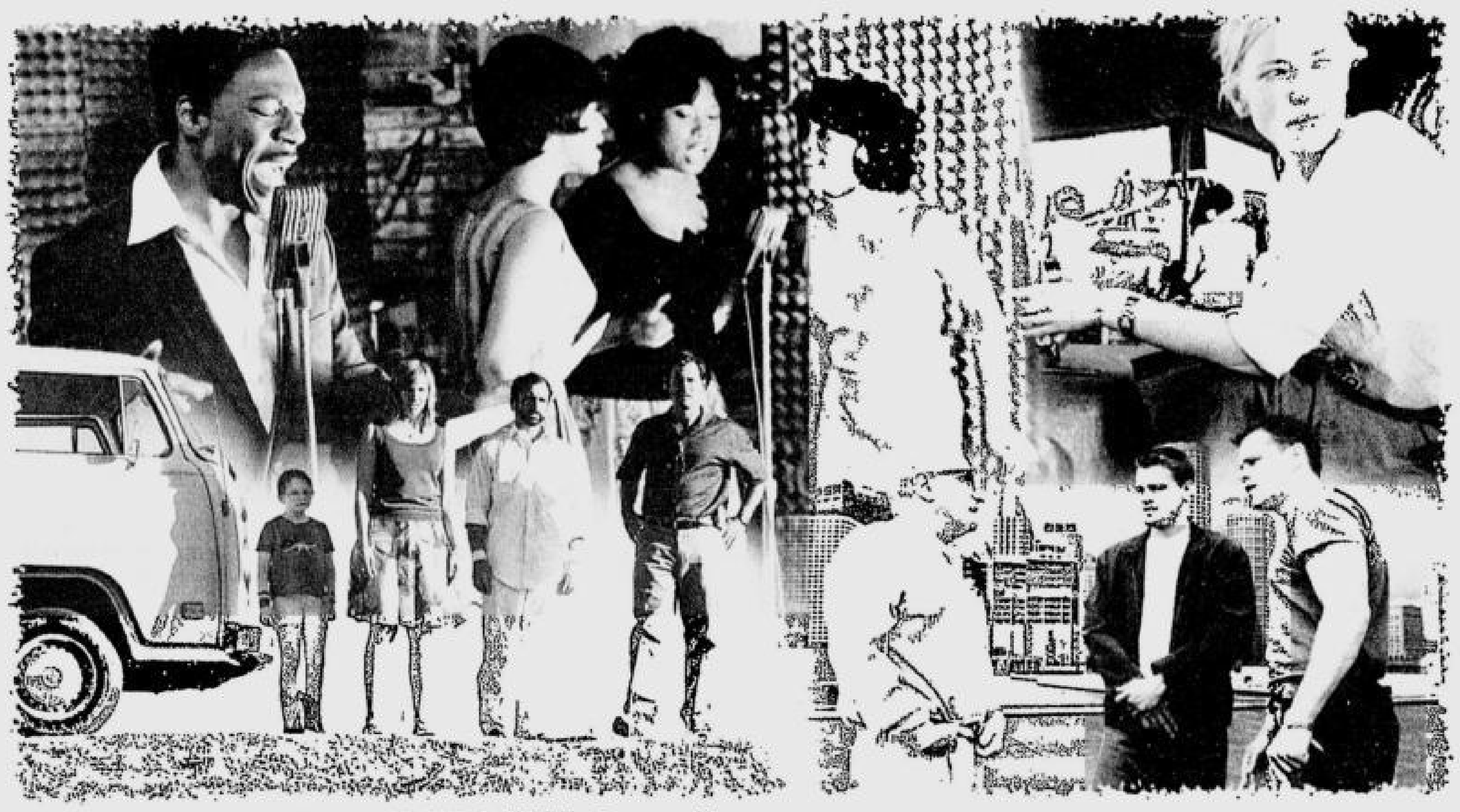
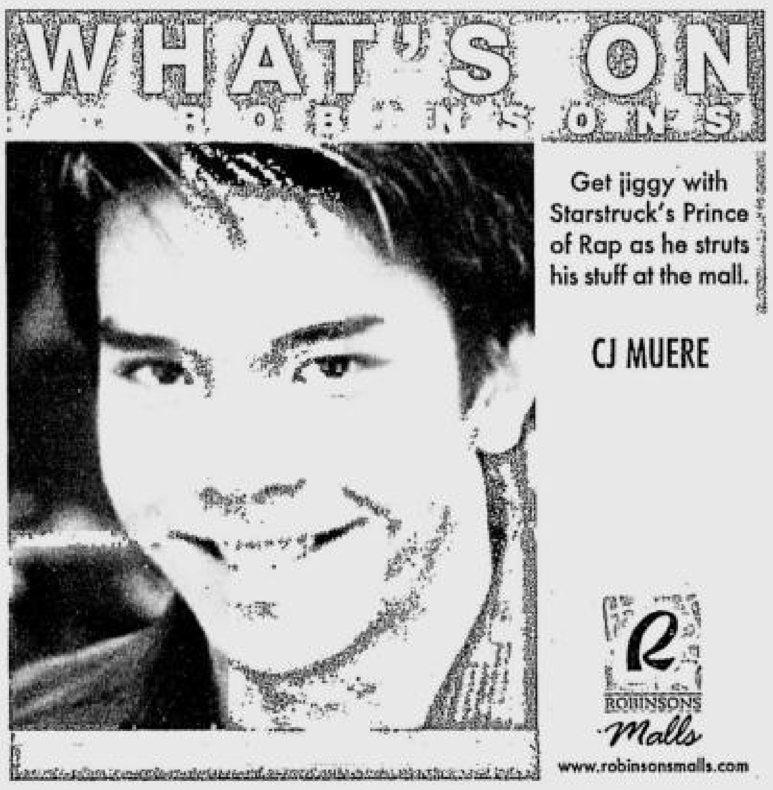


CLOCKWISE, from top left: "Dreamgirls," "Babel," "The Departed," "Little Miss Sunshine." Other front-runners: "Iwo Jima," "The Queen."



Get jiggy with Starstruck's Prince of Rap as he struts his stuff at the mall.

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'Dreamgirls' tops Oscar bets with 8 nods

But it is surprisingly shut out of Best Picture race

BEVERLY HILLS, California — The crowd-pleasing musical "Dreamgirls" led Academy Awards contenders Tuesday with eight nominations, but surprisingly was shut out in the Best Picture category after being considered a potential front-runner.

The sweeping multi-cultural ensemble drama "Babel" was close behind with seven, including Best Picture and acting honors for two newcomers to United States audiences, Mexico's Adriana Barraza and Japan's Rinko Kikuchi.

Crime, war, crisis

Other Best Picture nominees were the bloody crime saga "The Departed," the World War II spectacle "Letters From Iwo Jima," the road-trip comedy "Little Miss Sunshine" and the monarchy-in-crisis chronicle "The Queen."

Going into nominations day, the Best Picture competition looked unusually wide open, with no consensus on a favorite. With "Dreamgirls," a Golden Globe winner out of the race, the Best Picture competition was even more up for grabs.

But front-runners in all four acting categories nabbed nominations and seem poised to come home with Oscars on Feb. 25: Britain's Helen Mirren for Best Actress as British monarch Elizabeth II in "The Queen"; Forest Whitaker for Best Actor as Ugandan dictator Idi Amin in "The Last King of Scotland"; and Eddie Murphy and former "American Idol" finalist Jennifer Hudson as soulful singers in "Dreamgirls."

New experience

All four preceded the Oscar nominations with wins at the Golden Globes.

Oscar attention is a new experience for Murphy, whose fast-talking persona has brought him devoted audiences but little awards acclaim in his 25-year career. For Hudson, the nomination caps a speedy rise to stardom with her first film role, just two years after making her name as a finalist on the hit TV singing competition "American Idol."

14th for Streep

The Best Actress category featured a 14th nomination for two-time Oscar winner Meryl Streep, padding her record as the most-nominated actor ever, this time as a demonically demanding boss in "The Devil Wears Prada."

Joining Mirren and Streep as Best Actress nominees were Spain's Penelope Cruz as a woman dealing with bizarre domestic crises in "Volver"; Judi Dench as a scheming teacher in "Notes on a Scandal" and Kate Winslet as a woman in an affair with a neighbor in "Little Children."

Other Best Actor nominees were Leonardo DiCaprio as a mercenary hunting a rare gem in "Blood Diamond"; Ryan Gosling as a teacher with a drug addiction in "Half Nelson"; Peter O'Toole as a lecherous old actor in "Venus"; and Will Smith as a homeless dad in "The Pursuit of Happyness."

Early favorites

Whitaker is expected to come away with the Best Actor award, though sentiment is high for the Irish-born O'Toole, who has been nominated seven times, losing each. An eighth loss for O'Toole, who nearly turned down an honorary Oscar three years ago because he hoped to earn one outright, would put him in the record books as the actor with the most nominations without winning.

This finally may be the year for another perennial loser, Scorsese, who is tied with four other directors for the Oscar-futility record of five nominations and five losses.

"The Departed" marks Scors-

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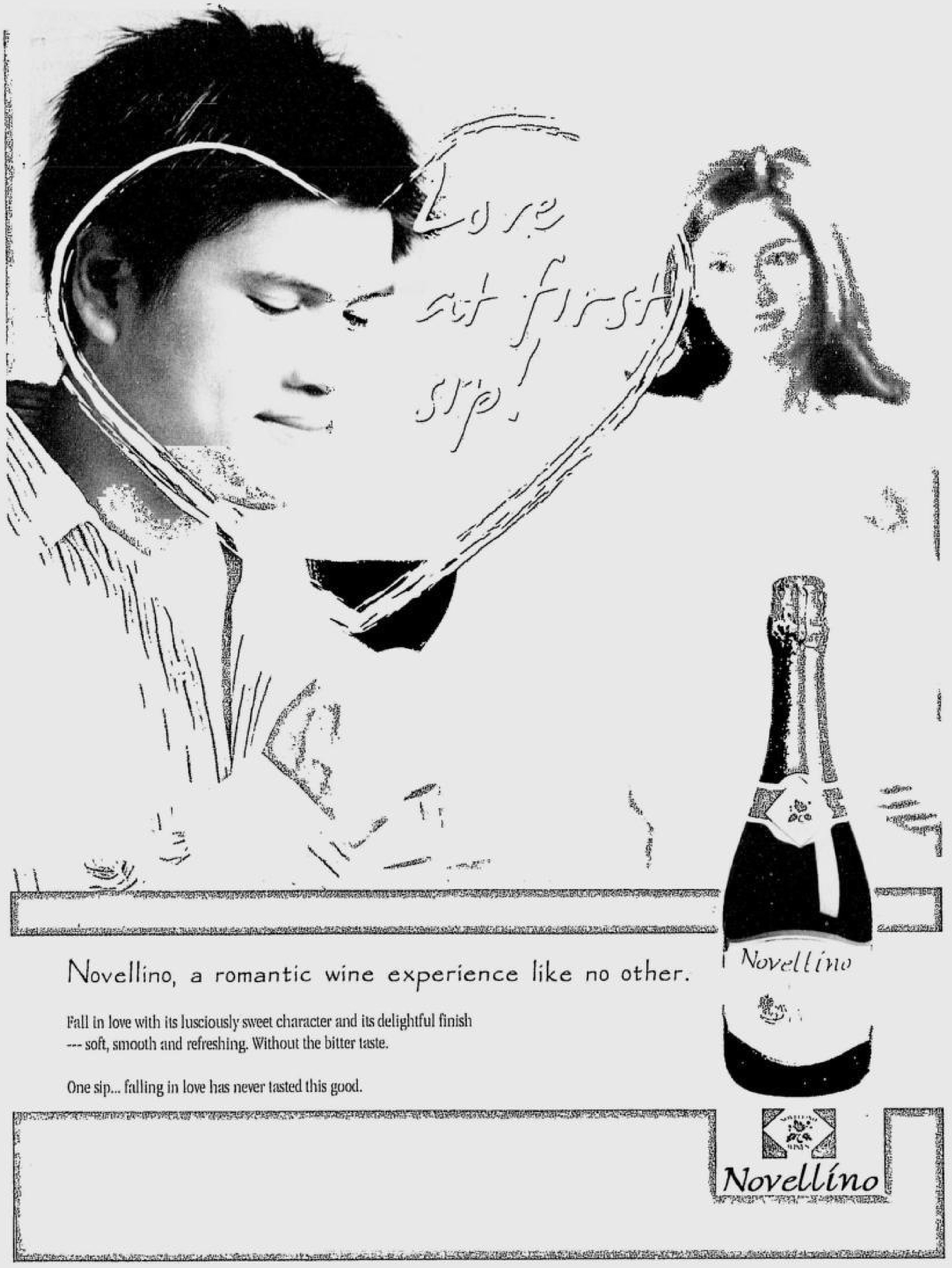

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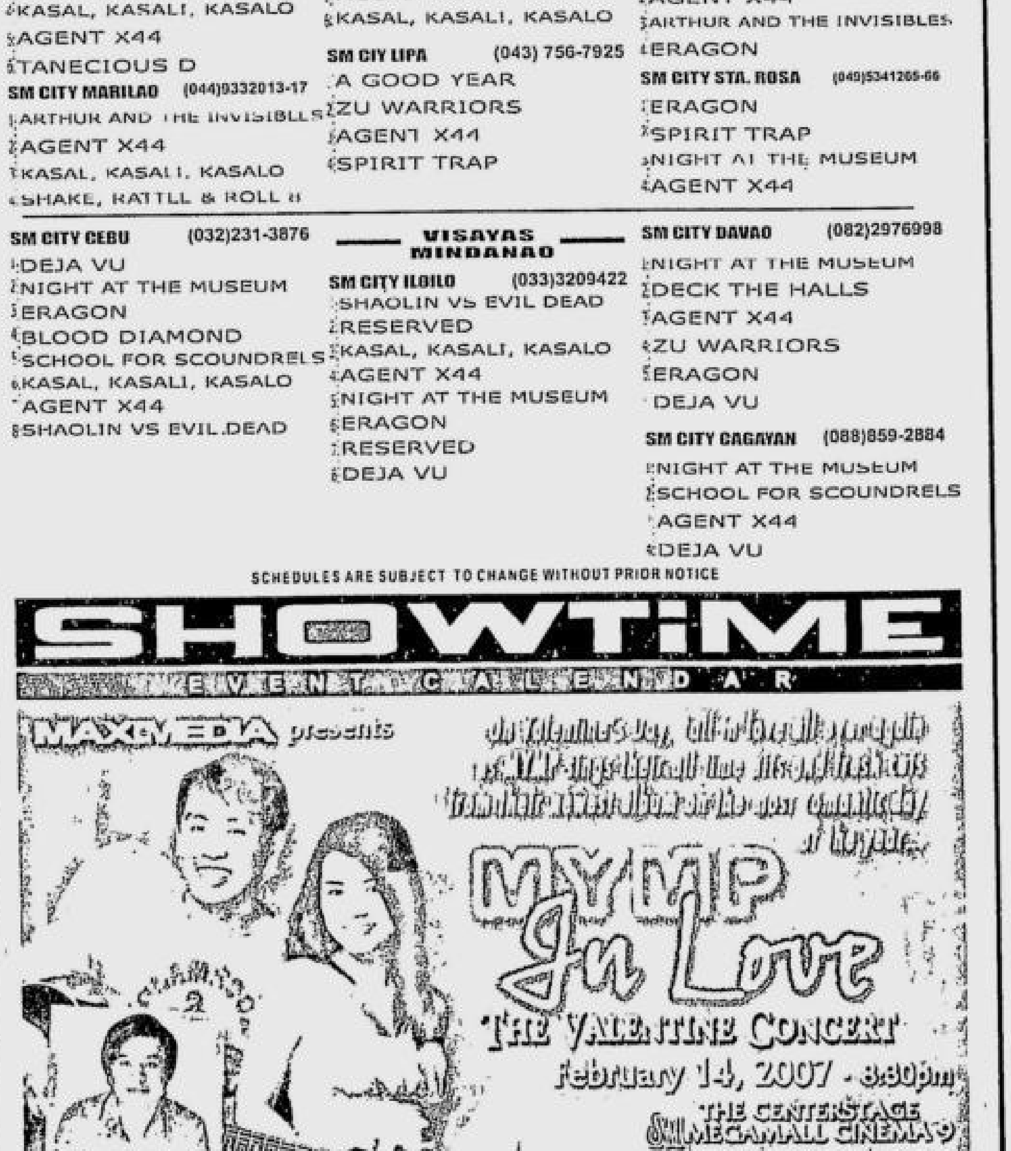
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Set in the minefields of modern suburbia, this film follows several inhabitants of a small American town as they fumble their way through adulthood. Numb-to-life housewife and mother Sarah Pierce (Kate Winslet) finds an outlet for her yearning in gorgeous househusband Brad Adamson (Patrick Wilson), who is crippled with insecurity over the fact that his perfect wife, Kathy (Jennifer Connely) is the family breadwinner.

When Sarah and Brad meet at the local playground one afternoon, a passionate affair is sparked. In a further attempt to reclaim his youthful fire, Brad joins a night football league with Larry Hedges (Noah Emmerich), a former cop who has begun to harass a convicted sex offender, Ronnie J. McGorvey (Jackie Earle Haley). The trouble lives eventually collide, causing each individual to take full responsibility for their not-so-responsible actions. It is bitingly funny and nakedly honest critique of middle class dysfunction.

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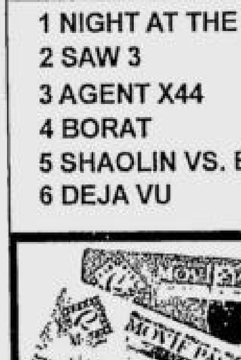
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HELEN MIRREN

MERYL STREEP

Oscar bets named

From page D1

ese's return to the cops-and-mobsters genre he mastered in decades past and is considered his best shot to finally win an Oscar, though a sixth defeat would put him alone in the record book as the losingest director ever. AP

The list

The major nominations, announced Tuesday at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills, California:

BEST PICTURE: "Babel," "The Departed," "Letters From Iwo Jima," "Little Miss Sunshine," "The Queen."

ACTOR: Leonardo DiCaprio, "Blood Diamond"; Ryan Gosling, "Half Nelson"; Peter O'Toole, "Venus"; Will Smith, "The Pursuit of Happyness"; Forest Whitaker, "The Last King of Scotland."

ACTRESS: Penelope Cruz, "Volver"; Judi Dench, "Notes on a Scandal"; Helen Mirren, "The Queen"; Meryl Streep, "The Devil Wears Prada"; Kate Winslet, "Little Children."

SUPPPORTING ACTOR: Alan Arkin, "Little Miss Sunshine"; Jackie Earle Haley, "Little Children"; Djimon Hounsou, "Blood Diamond"; Eddie Murphy, "Dreamgirls"; Mark Wahlberg, "The Departed."

SUPPORTING ACTRESS: Adriana Barraza, "Babel"; Cate Blanchett, "Notes on a Scandal"; Abigail Breslin, "Little Miss Sunshine"; Jennifer Hudson, "Dreamgirls"; Rinko Kikuchi, "Babel."

DIRECTOR: Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, "Babel"; Martin Scorsese, "The Departed"; Clint Eastwood, "Letters From Iwo Jima"; Stephen Frears, "The Queen"; Paul Greengrass, "United 93."

FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM: "After the Wedding," Denmark; "Days of Glory (Indigenes)," Algeria; "The Lives of Others," Germany; "Pan's Labyrinth," Mexico; "Water," Canada. AP

Almost lost in translation at Il Divo concert

DAVID Miller, Carlos Marin, Sebastien Izambard and Urs Buhler, performing as Il Divo, in a file photo.

By Pocholo Concepcion
Contributor

REVIEW

THE SAINTS WOULD HAVE turned green with envy.

As the operatic-pop vocal quartet Il Divo was winding down its one-night-only performance last Saturday at the Philippine International Convention Center, several women from the audience walked up the stage and began touching and kissing the hands and face of each singer. There the women lingered, beholding the objects of their adulation as though praying for some impossible favor.

People in the balcony section snickered at the bizarre sight. Or maybe they were envious. After all, everyone had been won over by the boy band with classically trained vocalists.

Handsome chaps

Actually, the members of Il Divo may not approximate the average age of yesterday's boy bands. Carlos Marin, the Spanish baritone who delivers most of the high notes, could pass for a fortysomething, hefty Julio Iglesias. David Miller, the American tenor, could be mistaken for a hard-nosed rugby player. No doubt, these guys are so darn handsome, and sleek-looking, that Pavarotti and his ilk might consider a makeover.

But are they good?

But how good, really, is Il Divo, a group that has ridden high on a crossover trend—pop songs with elements of classical music?

The classical music buff would certainly balk at the sight of the quartet using microphones—a no-no in opera singing, as it could be a sign of the performer's inability to project his voice all the way to the back rows. Or an attempt to cover up vocal and tonal deficiencies.

Apparently, Il Divo is out to break the rules. Whether or not it dishes out the kind of "authentic" opera that would please critics might be beside the point. The most exciting thing the group has achieved, two years after breaking out with a debut album that hit the top of both the US and European charts, is its ability to surprise with a repertoire that includes rock—in four languages.

Feel-good groove

At the PICC gig, the groove felt good with Electric Light Orchestra's "Night in White Satin" and, even if it got too maudlin, Harry Nilsson's "Without You." Yet there was an uneasy feeling in Eric Carmen's "All By Myself": the sound of four voices bellowing full-blast diminished the desolate mood of the original version.

On stage left, a Caucasian violinist led the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra in providing the music's symphonic parts. On stage right, a five-member band including Il Divo's musical director-drummer whipped out the rock beats. On a few occasions, the guitarist was tempted to crank it up like he was in a metal band.

In an interview with Il Divo members Marin and Sebastian Izambard at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel four hours before the concert, they admitted having difficulty with singing covers because, they said, they feel they have to sound better than the originals.

"Siempre" (Sony-BMG), the group's latest CD, contains originals although it's yet to be seen if, and how much, these will be appreciated.

Unabashed devotees

What was clear at the PICC gig was the crowd's ecstatic response to English/Spanish/French/Italian renditions of "Unchained Melody" "My Way" ... and "Somewhere," the number that turned an otherwise snooty set of matrons into an unabashed bunch of Il Divo devotees.

Frankly, Il Divo in concert can be predictable: A lone voice (usually Izambard, the youngest-looking and most adored member) does the first part, and then the other three join in before reaching a climactic, full-throttle finish. If you don't speak a word of Spanish or Italian, you'll be lost in translation.

ANTHONY Hopkins: "I want to poke people, not to cause pain, but just to wake them up."

At 69, Anthony Hopkins still feels like a 'rebel'

PARK CITY, UTAH—HE'S AN OSCAR-WINNING actor with roles such as serial killer Hannibal "the cannibal" Lecter. But at 69, Anthony Hopkins said he has arrived at a new, rebellious stage of life directing low-budget art films.

Hopkins' "Slipstream," which premiered this weekend at the Sundance Film Festival, marks the veteran actor's debut as a first-time filmmaker and is part of a new edition to Sundance called "New Frontier" where art and cinema collide.

"Yeah, I'm a rebel. I want to poke people, not to cause pain, but just to make them wake up," Hopkins told Reuters Sunday. "I feel I've arrived. I feel I'm starting anew ... I got a feeling I can be a guerrilla movie director."

Hopkins said he has long admired directors who took chances with their films like John Cassavetes, Roman Polanski, Oliver Stone and Quentin Tarantino. They are directors who like to mix things up and "upset the apple cart" of mainstream moviemaking.

"Slipstream" puts a new spin on storytelling technique. The film tells of a Hollywood screenwriter, Felix Bonhoffer (Hopkins), who confuses his life with the characters he is creating on the page.

Audiences are taken on a journey through Bonhoffer's mind to see historical events such as the Vietnam War that have shaped his thinking and, as a result, the thinking of his screenplay's characters.

Current events in Bonhoffer's life, such as getting pulled over by a police officer, begin to bleed over into his writing, and audiences are never quite sure—until the end—what is reality and what are simply Bonhoffer's thoughts and emotions.

His way

Hopkins said he wrote "Slipstream" to challenge audiences to consider the nature of time and space, and how human ideas can manifest themselves in reality.

"Slipstream" is not an easy film to figure out because it goes back-and-forth between present day and history and between what is real and what is fiction.

"I was really interested in breaking all the rules of cinema," Hopkins said.

At the "Slipstream" premiere in front of a packed audience at Sundance, festival director Geoff Gilmore told audiences, "It is rare that you get to see a real work of art" on film.

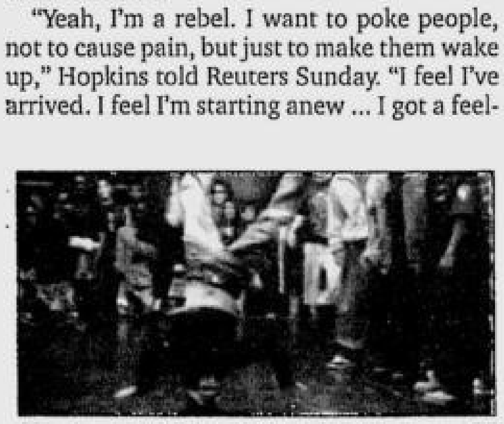
But Hopkins' "Slipstream" is not the only film and video art being showcased here at the top US film festival backed by Robert Redford's Sundance Institute for filmmaking.

Joining him in the New Frontier is "Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait," in which directors Philippe Parreno and Douglas Gordon used 17 cameras to track soccer player Zinedine Zidane through one 90-minute match.

In "Slipstream," Hopkins has used quick editing and digital technology to create a fast-paced movie that helps speed audiences to the conclusion of his nearly two-hour film.

"I was always fascinated with way you can twist everything around, and reshape it," he said, much like he is doing now with his own career.

Reuters



Sony Pictures

Box office top ten

Domestic revenues, Jan. 19-21

Rank • Film • Weekend gross (millions)
Gross to date • Weeks in release • Theaters

Rank	Film	Weekend gross (millions)	Gross to date	Weeks in release	Theaters
1.	Stomp the Yard	$12.3	$40.6	Two weeks	2,051
2.	Night at the Museum	$12.0	$204.9	Five weeks	3,483
3.	Dreamgirls	$8.0	$77.4	Six weeks	2,214
4.	The Hitcher	$7.8	$7.8	One week	2,835
5.	The Pursuit of Happyness	$6.3	$146.1	Six weeks	3,066
6.	Freedom Writers	$5.2	$26.5	Three weeks	2,286
7.	Pan's Labyrinth	$4.5	$9.9	Four weeks	609
8.	Children of Men	$3.7	$27.5	Five weeks	1,524
9.	The Queen	$3.4	$35.6	17 weeks	1,586
10.	Arthur and the Invisibles	$3.1	$9.3	Two weeks	2,248

SOURCE: Media By Numbers, LLC AP

Sterling graduates of local movies' 'Nakuha sa Tiyaga' school of acting

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

SINCE ACTING CAREERS HERE are often launched on the basis of good looks alone, stars' early performances are wooden, awkward, embarrassing and amateurish. Thank goodness, after some years and many roles, most inept stars finally learn the ropes and get their act together. Some of them even end up winning awards!

Call this local show business' "NST" ("Nakuha Sa Tiyaga") school of acting. This particular "school" has many stellar graduates, many of whom are still active today, continuing to enhance the TV-film scene with their now vastly improved performances.

A director of one of **Eddie Garcia**'s earliest movies recalls that the military man-turned-actor was initially clueless in his portrayal, and had to be closely directed so he could pass muster.

Well, Eddie turned out to be an eager student of the thespic art, and soon won awards—not only for acting, but eventually also for directing. In fact, he's one of the movie industry's double Hall of Famers.

Already in his 80s, Eddie is still acting in one TV or film project after another—proof positive that lessons learned well can last a long lifetime.

Dina Bonnevie's own screen debut in "Katorse" was similarly dodgy. She was a bit too old for the role, and its sexy demands must have thrown her off, because her performance was skittish and uncomfortable.

Flashforward a number of years, and Dina is now regarded as one of the industry's best actresses. Attracted by her beauty and verve, some of the country's most acclaimed filmmakers have cast her in their movies.

Amy Austria is another actress who has transformed herself, from sexy starlet to much-awarded actress. **Lorna Tolentino**, **Elizabeth Oropesa** and **Jaclyn Jose** also had their start in sexy movies, but are now screen thespians of note.

Wising up

Even Miss Universe **Gloria Diaz** was awkward in her star-making vehicle "Ang Pinakamagandang Hayop sa Balat ng Lupa," where she came off as a better equestrienne than actress! But, Gloria has wised up through the years, and is a busy and admired thespian in maturity.

Phillip Salvador was an unheralded supporting player in action flicks and could have stayed at the undistinguished level, had **Lino Brocka** not made him his protege and cast him in challenging films like "Jaguar" and "Bona."

Tetchie Agbayani was another sexy starlet who graduated to much better roles and projects. Her way up and out was the theater, where she impressed viewers with her on-target performance in a demanding two-character play.

After proving so convincingly that she could really act, Tetchie was cast in significant screen roles in films like "Kamakalawa," and was even tapped to play the plum dramatic role of Sisa in the TV serialization of Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere," directed by *the* **Eddie Romero**.

Sharon Cuneta was cute and bubbly in her first movies, but she was regarded as a clueless actress. Even in her big dramatic showcase, "Pasan Ko Ang Daigdig," her performance was deemed insufficient.

In the past decade, however, the now more mature Sharon has come into her own as an actress, by challenging herself with gritty and uncute roles in movies like "Madrasta" and "Crying Ladies."

Finally, the Superstar herself, **Nora Aunor**, was awkward in her first screen appearances, and started winning awards only much later.

But, it may not have been Nora's fault. She was so phenomenally popular that producers cast her in one quickie after another, and she had no time to refine her performances.

In fact, Nora recalls that, in one two-month period, she acted in *five* movies—all set in the same house! That's no way to grow as an actress, that's for sure.

Later however, Nora decided to give her acting talent the care and feeding it deserved, and astounded viewers with her superlative portrayals in "Bona," "Himala," "Fe, Esperanza, Caridad" and "Ina Ka ng Anak Mo."

Nakuha sa tiyaga, talaga!

COPACABANA

FROM celeb spot to disco and now, hip-hop and salsa club—The Copa, left, is not closing, says current owner. Above, famous clients when it first opened included Nat "King" Cole (center). AP

Copacabana looking for new home

NEW YORK—THE COPACABANA, the famed nightclub that entertained the smart set with a young Frank Sinatra in the 1940s and was the inspiration for a Barry Manilow hit song in the '70s, is looking for a new home again.

Its third incarnation, on a commercial block on West 34th Street, has been condemned by the city to make way for an extension of a subway line. Owner John Juliano does not have a lease signed yet on a new location, but he has until July 1 before he has to move out.

"We aren't closing," he said. "It's hurting our business, all this talk of us closing. I mean, maybe we have to renovate a new space. That may take some time, but we're coming back."

The Copa has endured change before. Since it first opened in 1941 on the fashionable East Side, it has morphed from the glitziest nightspot in town to disco on the West Side, the scene of Manilow's 1978 song "Copacabana," and now to a catering business and thumping hip-hop and salsa club.

"When it first opened it was the most famous nightclub in the world," Juliano said.

Money to spend

The club opened on East 60th Street at a time when the Great Depression was over, there was money to spend and people were itching to have a good time.

"The times were hot," said Kristin Baggelaar, author of the nonfiction book "The Copacabana." "It was almost like the roaring '20s."

Well-heeled New Yorkers were entertained by famous acts like Sinatra, Dean Martin and Jimmy Durante.

And then there were the Copa Girls, a troupe of leggy, fresh-faced dancers. Joan Collins and Raquel Welch got their start in the troupe.

In the '50s and '60s the club brought in rock acts and tried to roll with the times, but the club's popularity waned as home television sets became the favorite source of entertainment.

Attendance declined over the years and then owner Jules Podell died in 1972. The club sat vacant for several years until Juliano, Peter Dorn and Ron Hollick took it over in 1976, reopening it as a disco.

Its popularity was boosted in 1978 with "The Copacabana" by Manilow and Bruce Sussman—"the hottest spot north of Havana" where "music and passion were always in fashion."

AP

Boy Camara to sing '60s hits at RJ Bistro tonight

SHOW TIME

IF YOU STUDIED AT THE UNIVERSITY of the Philippines in the 1960s, whether an Upsilonian or Sigma Deltan, you wouldn't want to miss this jam session at RJ Bistro on Jupiter St., Makati tonight.

Not only is the reclusive Boy Camara singing in a gig again, he is doing Cliff Richard and Elton John—music for which he was a much sought after band vocalist in the cross-campus scene. Now in the real estate business, the former rock star lets his hair down occasionally to sing in the company of his fellow Upsilonians in Batch '66 who have organized the all-night dancing and fellowship starting at 6 p.m. together with their Sigma Deltan counterparts.

Camara will be joined by Sigma Deltan '71 Nancy Reyes and other Batch '66 members.

Opthalmologist Manny Tan takes a momentary leave from his practice to relive his Trini Lopez days. Lawyer Manny Topacio will sing Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis.

The Batch '66 Retro Band consists of: lawyer Andy Sta. Maria (lead guitar), Topacio (rhythm guitar), businessman Dodie Lagman (bass guitar), and ANC newscaster Angelo Castro Jr. (drums).

Ex-Cabinet secretary and UP professor of psychology Lenny de Jesus plays the keyboards.

Emcee will be Sigma Deltan, book author and ex-DJ Felice Prudente-Sta. Maria of the '70s radio program "All Night Stand."

Ex-Congressman Jun Aniag, new president of the Upsilon Sigma Phi Alumni Association, invites all alumni to come in blue jeans and white shirt, "Not only food and admission are free," Aniag said. "Gifts will be given away."

PAROKYA NI EDGAR

Parokya in Iloilo

Parokya ni Edgar performs at Pier 16 Bar and Restaurant, Iloilo City tomorrow.

The show is part of the Winston In Concert Tour 2007 and is open only to persons 18 years and older.

Side A at Hard Rock

Side A band will have a special performance at Hard Rock Café tomorrow, 9:30 p.m.

SIDE A

Call 893-4661 to 64.

Spirit in 2007

Retro band Spirit of '67 is featured at Beck's Bar, Grand Boulevard Hotel, tomorrow and Jan. 27, and at 20/20 Bar, Bellevue Hotel in Alabang on Jan. 31.

Thursday nights, the band is still the top draw at Makati Shangri-La's Conway's Bar.

Dell rocks Eastwood

Dell presents a series of concerts in Eastwood City featuring three of the hottest local bands—Up Dharma Down today, Orange and Lemons tomorrow, and Rivermaya on Jan. 27. The concerts start at 6 p.m.

Loving Ara

Ara Mina stars in "Loving Ara at 15" on Feb. 3, 8 p.m., at the Araneta Coliseum. Ogie Alcasid, Michael V, Antonio Aquitania, Jose Manalo, Jimmy Bondoc, Raimund Marasigan, Ney of 6Cyclemind and Rufa Mae Quinto are Ara's special guests.

ARA MINA

Today

"Dell Rocks" at the Eastwood Central Plaza with Up Dharma Down

Tomorrow

RJ 'n Friends with Moonstrucks at RJTV Bar, Jupiter St., Makati

"Dell Rocks" at the Eastwood Central Plaza with Orange and Lemons

"Let's Talk About Love" eaturing Kuh Ledesma and Pops Fernandez at Captain's Bar Mandarin Oriental; 9 p.m.

January 27

Erik Santos at SM Sta. Rosa Laguna

"Dell Rocks" at the Eastwood Central Plaza with Rivermaya

January 28

Mojofly at Metropolis Star Alabang; 4 p.m.

January 29

Metro Phi Resto Bar 2nd Anniversary Celebration at the Metrowalk Commercial Complex, Meralco Ave., Ortigas Center. Call 638-8896.

Jojo A at RJTV Bar, Jupiter St., Makati

January 30

Jojo A with Dale Adriatico at RJTV Bar, Jupiter St., Makati

January 31

The Spirit of '67 at The Bellevue Hotel in Alabang; 9 p.m.

Jojo A with Midnight Connection at RJTV Bar, Jupiter St., Makati

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CINEMA 3 LITTLE CHILDREN 11:00, 1:50, 4:40 7:30, 10:25 R-18
CINEMA 4 BABEL 10:30, 1:25, 4:25 7:25, 10:25 PG-13
CINEMA 5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 11:10, 2:00, 4:50 7:40, 10:30 GP

TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.

MUSIC MUSEUM	Jan. 23, 2007	Marissa Sanchez	8:30 PM
	Feb. 02 & 03, 2007	Piolo Pascual and Sam Milby	8:30 PM
	Feb. 7 & 8, 2007	Agot Isidro "Back to Basics"	8:30 PM
	Feb 13 & 14, 2007	Ogie Alcasid	8:00 PM
T·E·A·T·R·I·N·O PROMENADE GREENHILLS	EVERY MONDAY	DANCE NIGHT	7:00 PM
	JAN. 23, 30, 2007	DYORDS KO PO	8:30 PM
	JAN. 24, 2007	"PAKNERS" 9 Ball Celebrity Challenge	8:00 PM

FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS. CALL : 721-6726 OR 721-0635

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM MTRCB GP 12:20, 2:45, 5:10, 7:35, 10:00
2 BABEL (SUBJECT TO MTRCB RATING)
3 DÉJÀ VU MTRCB PG-13 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00
4 LITTLE CHILDREN MTRCB R-18 1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 10:00
PREMIERE THEATRE NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM MTRCB GP 1:30, 3:55, 6:20, 8:45

Movies and schedules are subject to change without prior notice

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For inquiries, call
687-6963
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MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

1 DÉJÀ VU 2:45, 5:35, 8:25, 11:05 PG-13
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 1:25, 3:50, 6:15, 8:40, 11:05 G
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 3:15, 5:40, 8:05, 10:30 G
4 LITTLE CHILDREN 2:20, 5:20, 8:20, 11:10 R-18

glorietta G ALABANG TOWN AYALA CENTER CEBU MARKET! MARKET! Ayala Malls

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G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 ERAGON	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	3 BABEL	4 AGENT X44	
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 BABEL	2 DÉJÀ VU	3 THX NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS		
	4 INNOCENT VOICES	5 STRANGER THAN FICTION	6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	7 LITTLE CHILDREN	
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 BABEL	2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM			
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX BABEL GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS			
	3 STRANGER THAN FICTION GUARANTEED SEATS	4 LITTLE CHILDREN GUARANTEED SEATS	5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM GUARANTEED SEATS	2 BABEL			
	3 LITTLE CHILDREN	4 AGENT X44	5 DÉJÀ VU		
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	2 SCHOOL FOR SCOUNDRELS	3 ERAGON	4 AGENT X44	
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM	2 LITTLE CHILDREN			
	3 DÉJÀ VU	4 AGENT X44	5 BABEL		

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Customer Service text hotline: 0917 6095900
Customer Service Numbers: Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 9pm
Greenbelt - 757 4853, from 11am to 9pm
Alabang Town Center - 842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc 324
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GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER
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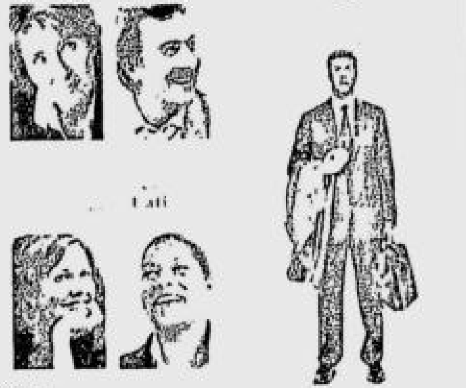

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ABS-CBN shows: Hello, goodbye!

CHANGES ARE BREWING IN ABS-CBN 2, according to sources. Specifically, old shows are ending to make way for new programs.

This was confirmed by Maloli K. Espinosa, vice president for Government, Corporate Affairs and PR.

Among the shows that are concluding their runs are the prime time game show "Deal or No Deal" and the *fantaserye* "Super Inggo."

Espinosa clarified that these shows were not cancelled, that the termination was due to the fact that these shows have reached the end of its "usual life cycle."

She reiterated that "Super Inggo" and "Deal or No Deal" have gone beyond the regular 13-week run of most ABS-CBN canned programs. "These shows have been extended already. But they will soon end to free time slots for new programs like the soap opera 'Maria Flordeluna,' the action-adventure 'Rounin' and the second season of the reality competition 'Pinoy Big Brother.'" *Bayani San Diego Jr.*

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DÉJÀ VU **PG13** 1:55,4:40,7:25,10:10	**LITTLE CHILDREN** **R18** 2:30,5:10,7:50,10:30	**BABEL** **PG13** 2:00,4:50,7:40,10:30

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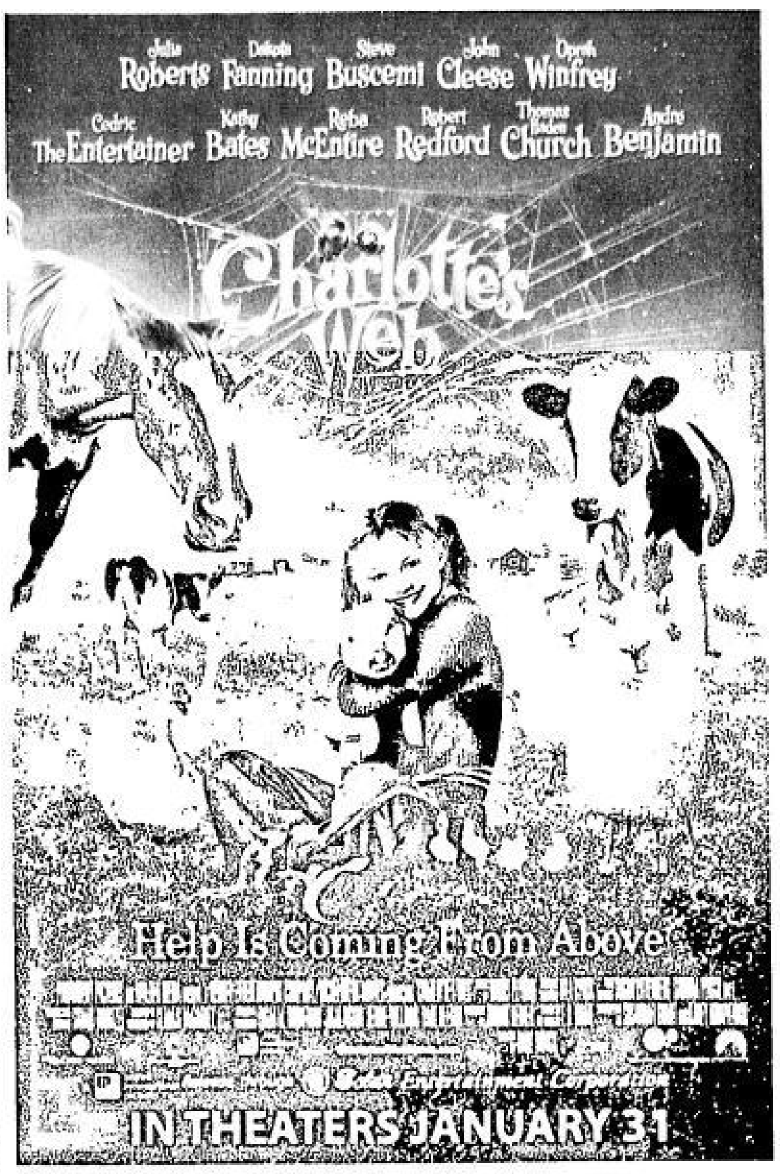

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AGENT X-44 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40	SAW 3 12:30 / 2:50 / 5:10 / 7:30 / 9:50	DEJAVU 1:20 / 4:10 / 7:00 / 9:50	
ERAGON 12:20 / 2:40 / 5:00 / 7:20 / 9:50	KASAL, KASALI, KASALO 1:00 / 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40	THE BLOOD DIAMOND 1:05 / 4:00 / 6:55 / 9:50	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 1:35 / 4:05 / 6:35 / 9:05

ALI MALL 5

AGENT X-44 11:55 / 2:05 / 4:15 / 6:25 / 8:35	NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM 12:35 / 3:05 / 5:35 / 8:05	BABEL 11:30 / 2:30 / 5:30 / 8:30
DEJAVU 12:00 / 2:50 / 5:40 / 8:30	LITTLE CHILDREN 12:00 / 2:50 / 5:40 / 8:30	DOLBY DIGITAL dts SDDS

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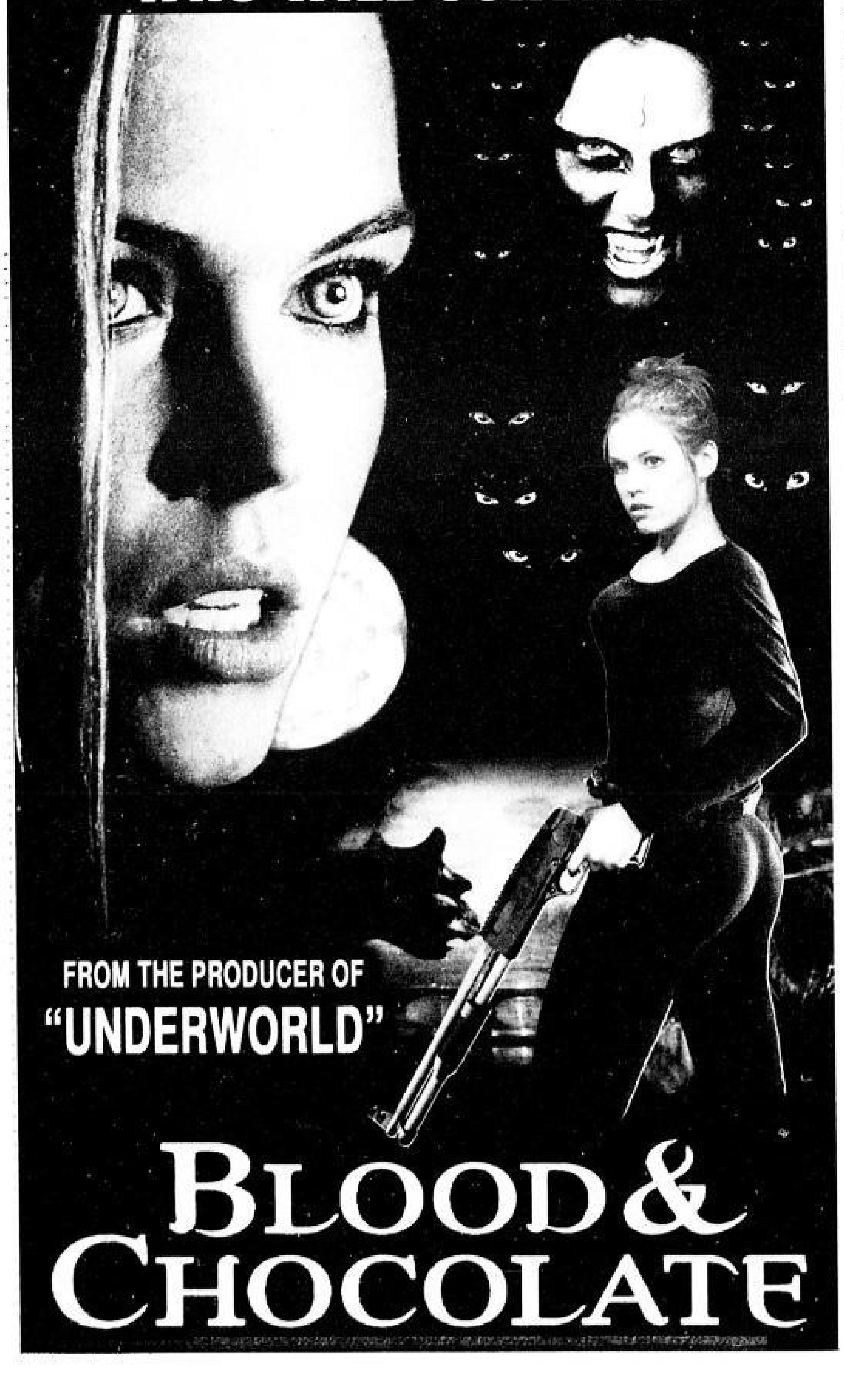
OPENS JAN. 31

WEREWOLVES vs HUMANS... WHO WILL SURVIVE?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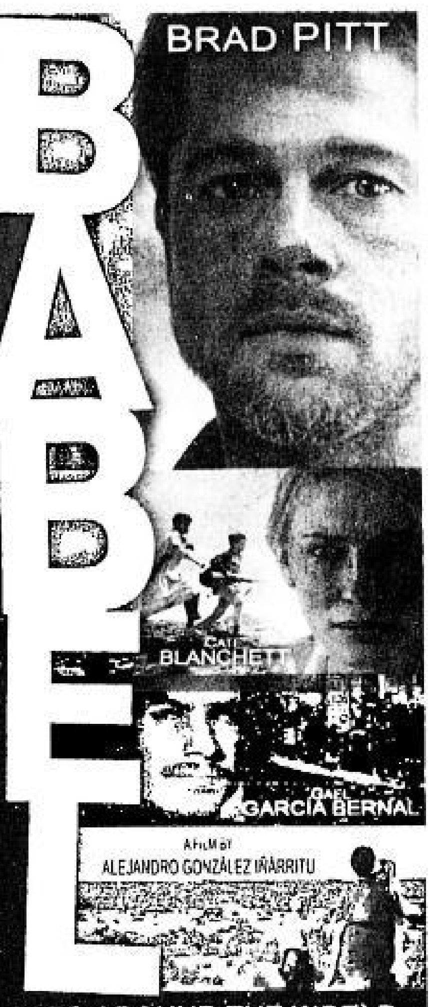

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4 LITTLE CHILDREN
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2 DÉJÀ VU
3 AGENT X 44
4 LITTLE CHILDREN

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3 AGENT X 44
4 LITTLE CHILDREN
5 RESRVED

metropolis star cinema
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2 LITTLE CHILDREN
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 BLOOD DIAMOND

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1 ROB-B-HOOD
2 AGENT X 44
3 DÉJÀ VU

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
Pacific Mall Lucena Tel (042) 660-5271
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2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
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3 ERAGON
4 DÉJÀ VU
5 BABEL
6 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
7 BLOOD DIAMOND
8 LITTLE CHILDREN
9 KASAL KASALI KASALO
10 AGENT X 44

Blue Wave
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
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2 LITTLE CHILDREN
3 AGENT X 44
4 KAMASUTRA-3
5 KASAL, KASALI, KASALO

MARKETPLACE
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tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 AGENT X 44
2 SHAOLIN EVIL DEAD -3
3 PLAESE CALL
4 RESERVED

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
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2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 BLOOD DIAMOND

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 DÉJÀ VU

Jade Cinema
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1 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
2 ERAGON
3 KAMASUTRA-3
4 A GOOD YEAR

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 AGENT X 44
2 LIGALIG (BATANG MAYNILA)

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1 DÉJÀ VU
2 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4 LITTLE CHILDREN

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1 SAW - 3
2 AGENT X 44
3 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM
4

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 DÉJÀ VU
2 AGENT X 44
3 ERAGON

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
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2 AGENT X 44
3 DEJA VU
4 ROB-B-HOOD

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
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1 BLOOD DIAMOND
2 AGENT X 44
3 DEJA VU

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2 ERAGON

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2 SHAOLIN VS' EVIL DEAD

Lianas Cinema
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1 SPIRIT TRAP
2 BAYARAN
3 BASA SA DAGAT
4 ERAGON

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 SAW - 3
2 ROOM SERVICE
3 AGENT X 44
4 GAMITAN
5 NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 ZU WARRIOR
2 SPIRIT TRAP
3 AGENT X 44
4 SAW - 3

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 SHAOLIN VS' EVIL DEAD
2 KAMASUTRA - 3

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KATRINA HALILI

Katrina Halili: Do you think I'm sexy?

KATRINA HALILI INSISTS SHE has no sex appeal.

"Even when I was younger, I didn't have any suitors," she tells INQUIRER Entertainment. "Until now, men do not court me."

Katrina, 20, feels her sexy image has alienated her.

"I don't see anything wrong with being sexy," she says. "[Though] I don't go all the way naked when I do magazine pictorials. I wouldn't do anything to hurt myself."

Katrina has gone on the cover of FHM twice and was calendar girl for the men's magazine last year. She has also made its 100 Sexiest list three times, coming in at No. 8 in 2004, No. 14 in 2005 and topping it last year.

SHARON STONE

She never planned on a sexy image, Katrina says. "I never dreamed of being an actress ... or of joining 'Starstruck' in the first place. A roving crew just spotted me. I was reluctant at first, but they kept asking me, [until] I agreed."

MANDY MOORE

She simply takes what comes her way, Katrina, a regular on GMA 7's "Atlantika," says. "If I no longer enjoy what I do, I'll stop. If no more [offers] come, I won't even look." *Nini Valera*

Worst of the worst

LOS ANGELES—Sharon Stone and "Basic Instinct 2" were top of the flops here Monday as organizers of Hollywood's annual Oscars parody—the Razzies—unveiled their nominations for 2006's "Worst of the Worst."

The critically panned sequel to the 1992 psychological murder mystery received seven Razzie nods, which come one day before the official Oscars nominations are announced in Beverly Hills on Tuesday.

ZIYI ZHANG

"Unenjoyable, unerotic, unwatchable," was how one reviewer summed up "Basic Instinct 2" last year, while another stuck the boot into screen goddess Stone, opining that there "are inflatable toys that are livelier." *AFP*

Polishing her English

HONG KONG—Zhang Ziyi has just finished voice and dialect classes at Juilliard School in New York—to polish her English delivery skills, her manager Ling Lucas told The Associated Press in an e-mail Tuesday.

Lucas also confirmed Zhang has a voice role in the upcoming animated movie, "TMNT," based on the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles cartoon characters. The movie will be released in March in the United States.

Zhang earlier studied at China's Central Academy of Drama in Beijing. *AP*

Struggle with depression

NEW YORK—Mandy Moore has a lot going for her, including a starring role opposite Diane Keaton in the upcoming comedy "Because I Said So." Even so, she says she has fought depression.

"A few months ago I felt really low, really sad—depressed for no reason," the 22-year-old actress-singer says in an interview in the February issue of Jane magazine, on newsstands this week.

Moore, newly single after high-profile relationships with actor Zach Braff and tennis standout Andy Roddick, says her recent split with Braff did not help matters.

Moore started out as a squeaky-clean teen singer and later crossed over into movies.

"I feel bad that people wasted their money on such trite, blah pop music," says Moore about her earlier success. "I'm [now] asking myself questions, like 'Who am I? What do I want to do? Am I living up to my full potential?'" *AP*

PARIS HILTON

Paris on probation

LOS ANGELES—Paris Hilton was placed on 36 months probation and ordered to pay fines after pleading no contest on Monday to alcohol-related reckless driving, a reduction of an original charge of driving under the influence.

Hilton did not appear in court. The plea was entered by her attorneys Howard Weitzman and Shawn Chapman Holley, the city attorney's office said.

Hilton was arrested on Sept. 7 after allegedly being seen weaving on a Hollywood street in her Mercedes-Benz, seemingly intoxicated.

Police said she failed a field sobriety test and had a blood alcohol level at which an adult driver is in violation of the law.

Hilton, 25, later said she may have been "speeding a little bit" and was on her way to get a hamburger because she had filmed a music video all day without eating. *AP*

Post-mortem preem

PARK CITY, Utah—A film directed by a slain New York actress had its Sundance Film Festival premiere and her widowed husband announced that he was setting up a foundation in her name.

Adrienne Shelly's film "Waitress" opened Sunday to both cheers and weeping, as its producers and the audience reflected on the grim circumstances surrounding the project.

Shelly, 40, wrote, directed and starred in the movie— which was accepted into the festival only a short time before she was discovered slain in her Manhattan apartment. A 19-year-old Ecuadorean immigrant, Diego Pillco, charged in her death, has pleaded not guilty. *AP*

HBO series for Tomlin

LOS ANGELES— Lily Tomlin will star in an hour-long comedy series for HBO, created by husband-and-wife producers Harry Thomason and Linda Bloodworth-Thomason of "Designing Women" and "Evening Shade" sitcom fame.

The comedy, "12 miles of Bad Road," features Tomlin as Amelia Shakespeare, head of a real estate company and matriarch of a wealthy Dallas family, HBO said Monday.

An air date has yet to be set, and HBO did not indicate how many episodes of the show it had ordered. *AP*

KEIRA KNIGHTLEY

At odds with gays

LOS ANGELES — "Grey's Anatomy" star Isaiah Washington, under fire for using a gay slur about a co-star, met with gay rights activists who said he agreed to help educate the public about the cruelty of such language.

"He seemed very sincere in his interest in working with us in an ongoing basis," Kevin Jennings, executive director of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, said after the meeting Monday.

Last October, Washington used the term "faggot" about castmate T.R. Knight during an on-set argument with co-star Patrick Dempsey. He used it again backstage at the Jan. 15 Golden Globes as he denied ever uttering it. *AP*

Me, anorexic?

LONDON—British actress Keira Knightley filed a libel suit Monday over a news story she claims suggested that she has anorexia and is responsible for a teenage girl's death from the eating disorder.

Simon Smith, a lawyer with Schillings law firm, said the 21-year-old star's lawsuit was filed against Associated Newspapers, publisher of the Daily Mail, for an article on Jan. 11.

Smith indicated Knightley was unhappy with a link the newspaper made between her and a teenage girl who died of anorexia. "The article made reference to what it perceived to be Ms Knightley's very slim appearance, and carried a photograph of [hers], taken without her consent, wearing a bikini and relaxing on a beach on holiday," Smith said.

In July last year, Knightley admitted that her grandmother and great-grandmother had both developed anorexia, but claimed to be surprised when people started inquiring about her own eating habits. *AFP*

Urban opens up

NASHVILLE, Tennessee—In a video posted on his website, country singer Keith Urban thanked his fans and praised his wife, Nicole Kidman, for their support during alcohol abuse treatment that turned out to be three times longer than planned.

Urban entered the Betty Ford Center on Oct. 19 for what he thought would be a 30-day treatment.

The singer has publicly acknowledged a former addiction to cocaine, and said he decided to stay in rehab for three months because he realized that learning to abstain was only part of the process to recovery. "And so 30 days became 60, and 60 days became 90, and with each week that passed I found myself really learning how to surrender." *AP*

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Bong Revilla's son is Luigi, not Paulo

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

MEA CULPA! I WROTE YESTERDAY THAT THE name of **Bong Revilla**'s son with my friend **L.G.** is **Paulo**. Pardon my memory lapse. It's been ages since I last heard from my friend. All I know is that she's happily married now. The boy's name is **Luigi**.

I don't mean to rock the boat. I just feel that after **Gretchen Barretto** spilled the beans on Bong, he ought to speak up now. The ball is in his court. Knowing him, he's got the balls to stand up for his kids—legit or not.

Show biz game

Mariel Rodriguez just shrugs off rumors that she and her "Wowowee" co-host **Janelle Jamer** are not getting along well off-cam. "I don't know where they got the idea na *nagplaplastikan lang kami ni* Janelle *sa* show. We both find it funny and weird," Mariel sighs.

Oh well ... just like in their noontime show, they gotta know how to play the many games of show biz where everybody is fair game.

Surprise

Ogie Alcasid promises to clear up all speculations about him by June. I teased him. "Why June? Does it have something to do with a bride?" He laughs. "*Basta* surprise *na lang*." Will it be a pleasant surprise or more of a shocker?

Homeless heart

Birthday girl **Toni Gonzaga** just moved to her new house in Taytay. But her heart still hasn't found its home. "I'm not rushing things. I never plan my love life. It will just come. Besides, I don't need a guy to inspire me. There are many other worthwhile sources for that."

What if **Luis Manzano** and **Sam Milby** both ask her out on V-day? Who would she rather go with? "Whoever asks first." First come, first serve, huh? Love all you can. No sharing and leftover feelings allowed.

Dad's mark

Heard this cute anecdote about **Mark Herras** and his dad. Mark was hanging out in his fave Internet café when his dad dropped by to give him some money. Mark made *lambing* for P500 more. To think he earns millions, but he doesn't usually carry that much cash. Perhaps it's his dad's way of disciplining him so his hard-earned money doesn't go to waste. Better not spend it all in one place or on one pretty face, Mark!

Big debt

Got this frantic text from the business partner of **Hubert Navarro** who co-produced the 24th Luna awards (Film Academy of the Philippines) '06: "Up to now, 8 Elephant Productions hasn't paid us. We shelled out 3M. They promised R.O.I. by Nov plus 50% profit. That's 4.5M total. All their checks bounced."

Until press time, I tried to reach 8 Elephant but got no reply. Is their debt really as enormous as an elephant?

'Abt Ur Luv'

Reluctant lovers **Shaina Magdayo** and **Rayver Cruz** are teamed up in "Star Magic Presents Abt Ur Luv" (every Saturday, 5 p.m.). Love is still a vicarious thing for them. They feel it through their roles as Neri and Gens. In real life, it's all feelers. "*Nagpaparamdam naman si* Rayver by the extra attention he gives me but *di siya pormal pang nanliligaw*," Shaina reveals. They don't feel threatened by the sudden popularity of **Kim Chui** and **Gerald Anderson**. "We all have our time. It's good that the network is discovering new stars."

The more, the merrier. One love fits all!

'Idol' finalists

The Final 12 of the recently concluded "Philippine Idol" will have a pre-Valentine concert on Feb. 9, 8 p.m. at the Big Dome. Catch **Pow, Drae, Raymond, Jan, Apple, Miguel, Gian, Stef, Arms, Ken, Jeli** and **Mau** as they relive the spectacular musical display of talent reminiscent of the competition.

Instead of a dozen red roses for V-day, let the dazzling dozen serenade you "Idol" style. Call 9115555.

Cogie's mall

Actor **Cogie Domingo**'s ONE Greenhills Shopping Plaza (Annapolis) will open its doors on Jan. 28. Cogie will welcome his special friend **Lovi Poe** with open arms as she holds a free concert with Sam Milby to celebrate the grand event. Joining them are **Chokoleit**, Shirely & D' Empire band and **Cherry Lou**. Shop till you drop, LOVI with no stop, huh, Cogie?

E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com